

During the recent budget process, the city manager's message made it clear that the new year capital focus would be investing in tools needed to enable the organization to meet key project objectives. While the bulk of these tools relate directly to various public works areas, there is an equally urgent need for better tools for records management, data gathering, analysis, decision making, efficiency improvements, communications and problem solving. Most people recognize the value of appropriate tools for public works staff. But although we are in the "information age" and new technology touches so much of our daily lives, many people are slow to grasp the potential of new information tools.

During the city goal discussion, several objectives were identified that would benefit significantly from improved information tools. Examples include the following areas:

- Survey residents to identify their experience with and expectations of City services.
- Evaluate the responsibilities of the City Manager, as well as those of staff members, to ensure that they meet the needs of the Yachats Community.
- Improve effectiveness of code enforcement.
- Communicate with citizens by providing written minutes, website content, and monthly newsletter, using updated contact information.

These objectives are all areas where an information tool like a database using business logic and a system of integrated data, offers significant improvements in ways to address tissues while reducing labor intensive tasks staff would have to perform. Companies and organizations are using tools like this to survey people, track items, manage complex processes, perform analysis, improve communications, improve services and organizational efficiency. Given the current outlook for skilled staff recruitment, the sooner the city begins looking at innovative ideas to improve, the sooner our community, council, commissions and staff will begin to enjoy the benefits.

To move this process forward, I am recommending an intergovernmental agreement between the City of Yachats and Oregon State University's Center for Applied Systems and Software (CASS). Once the agreement is in place, CASS will need to do an assessment of the existing code, applications, and the scope of work that the City of Yachats desires. Because of the size and complexity of the project, CASS is recommending a phased approach.

The initial phase will require a temporary development domain based on the old [YachatsOregon.org](http://YachatsOregon.org) code (Phase 1) followed by migration of the [GoYachats.com](http://GoYachats.com) apps the city wants to retain (Phase 2) and finally the new applications the council approves (Phase 3). Phase 1 will allow the city to bring the old document library on-line along with all the dynamic reports and limited access to the property inventory.

Since CASS works on a time and materials contract model, the initial review will require a small budget somewhere between \$3-4,000. This will produce a more accurate estimate of the cost of phase one of the project and time to complete. Conceptually, the report is equivalent to an engineering estimate for a public works project. The council can then decide on how to proceed.

CASS is an OSU student internship program. So most of the coding work is done by students under the design supervision of OSU staff. Clients benefit from the lower billing rates for student workers while providing students with real world development experience. One of the supervising staff is the person responsible for both the [GoYachats.com](http://GoYachats.com) and original [YachatsOregon.org](http://YachatsOregon.org) sites. His knowledge of and experience with the Yachats database should be a significant factor in helping the development group come up to speed much faster than starting at ground zero with an outside development group.

Given the current efforts between the city and the chamber of commerce, it makes sense to phase out the [GoYachats.com](http://GoYachats.com) site as a visitor information source. Long term, all city web services would be delivered from the [YachatsOregon.org](http://YachatsOregon.org) domain resulting in a direct savings of \$11,000 a year while improving information available to the council, commissions, staff and the public. Initially it will take time to bring services like the document library current. This would be a perfect exercise for a small group of volunteers to migrate city documents from the past three year to the document library and I would be happy to organize that effort once a few improvements have been made.

Included in the council packet are documents that outline the functional areas and needed improvements in the current information tool. The text document titled [Yachats Information System](#) lists key objectives for this project; provides some examples and attempts to explain the concept of [Business Logic](#) as it applies in information systems. The CASS document provides background information about the Center for Applied Systems & Software.

Council approval will authorize councilor Scott working with the city manager to complete and submit an intergovernmental agreement (IGA) and payment to OSU CASS for the purpose of estimating the time and cost of phase 1 on the Yachats database upgrade and deployment. Once the IGA is signed by both OSU and City of Yachats city manager, CASS staff will be granted access to the Yachats database and code. Database work will only commence after council approval of phase 1.

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