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Lopez, Donna

From: Saul Tannenbaum [saul@tannenbaum.org]
Sent: Monday, June 03, 2013 3:12 PM
To: City Council
Cc: Lopez, Donna
Subject: On raising email storage limits for the Council, City Manager Agenda #9

Councilors,

In response to the City Manager's report on the feasibility of increasing disk storage for Council, I offer the following comments:

In his response, the Manager says:

> If we took the limits off or even raised them for some it would push the current infrastructure to maximum capacity and shorten the useful life of the system. At the current level of storage, if there is a failure, we estimate it would take weeks to restore.

There are many way to judge the "useful life" of a system. One way, which is reflected in the Manager's response, is to base it simply on the forecasts made when it was purchased. Purchase of the system was no doubt justified based on amortizing the cost over a certain number of years, and, if it lasted less than that, the justification might be called into question.

But a system has reached the end of its useful life when it no longer meets the needs of its users, even if the system hasn't met the financial longevity goals of its justification.

As many of you know, I managed the email systems for Tufts University for over a decade, and I understand the constraints here, as well as the limited options ITD has. Forecasting email demand is difficult and there really is no fault to be found in misjudging it.

Where fault can be found is in the inflexible, IT-department centric response. IT services, including email, exist for the convenience of its users. When they are not meeting the needs of the users, the job of an IT manager is to reassess plans, and change accordingly.

To say "we can't upgrade storage because we're not replacing the system for 3 years" has it exactly backwards. The correct response should be "we underestimated storage needs, and our disaster recovery analysis shows we'd suffer a weeks-long email outage should there be a catastrophic failure. We hope the Council will be supportive of a special appropriation to replace our email system when we submit it."

This is also important to note in light of Mary Hart's response to Councilor Cheung about moving to Google mail. She noted that the Exchange license cost $80,000 as a one time cost, but that Google would be some yearly cost (I believe $75,000 was the number cited.) This ignored the real costs of operating the infrastructure, and what the costs would be to actually provide the services Councilors need.

I would urge the Council reject this report and request that the Manager return with a plan to advance the email system replacement or to move to an external service that

meets user needs, for example, Google Mail or the equivalent Microsoft service.

Email these days is a commodity service and, in general, Cambridge would be better off if its IT resources were spent on City-specific services and the provision of commodity services were left to specialists.

- Saul Tannenbaum
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cc: Donna Lopez, Interim City Clerk, for inclusion in the City Council record
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