

***VITAL RECORDS IMPROVEMENT FUND
ADVISORY COMMITTEE***

-MINUTES-

***Thursday
January 18, 2001***

Approved Minutes

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Vital Records Improvement Fund Advisory Committee Meeting

January 18, 2001

Health and Welfare Building
Conference Room 212
6 Hazen Drive
Concord, New Hampshire 03301

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

William Armstrong, IT Manager, DITM Appointment
William R. Bolton, Jr., State Registrar
Jane Ireland, Town Clerk Member
Tom Janosz, Funeral Director Appointment
Patricia Little, City Clerk Member
Debra Eastman, Town Clerk Appointment
Frank Mevers, State Archivist Appointment
Thomas A. Andrew, MD, Physician Appointment
Kathy Bizarro in attendance for Pat Seskes, Health Information Specialist Appointment

COMMITTEE MEMBERS EXCUSED:

David Kruger, Public Member Appointment
Sharon Dery, Concord City Clerk, City Clerk Appointment

STAFF PRESENT:

Mark Andrew, Administrator, Division of Epidemiology and Vital Statistics, OCPH
Don Gerow, Office of Information Systems
John O'Neal, Office of Information Systems
Dr. Jesse Greenblatt, Director, DEVS
Melanie A. Orman, Program Specialist, DEVS
Stephen M. Wurtz, Supervisor, Bureau of Vital Records
Mark Parris, Manager, Information Technology
Barbara Whittemore, Secretary, BVR

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Vital Records Improvement Fund Advisory Committee Meeting

1. Approval of Minutes:

The meeting was called to order at 10:00 AM by the chair, Ms. Little. The minutes from the November 22, 2000 meeting were presented for approval. Dr. Mevers asked that a correction be made to the spelling of his name. With the correction noted Ms. Ireland made a motion to approve the corrected minutes, Dr. Mevers seconded. The committee voted unanimously to approve the minutes.

2. DHHS OIS update:

Mr. Gerow distributed the Vital Records Implementation Support report to the committee. The first item on his agenda:

New Installations:

The latest VRV sites, (Berlin, Derry, Laconia, Lebanon, Peterborough and Portsmouth) were set up within the last two weeks. A training session was held for users yesterday. Clerks were asked to bring a Zip disk with their backup data. While they were in the training session, their data was copied.

The Helpdesk procedures were one of the topics covered in the session. The new users were instructed on how to utilize the Seneca help desk. The toll free number was provided, the cost of the service, the benefit of using it was explained, along with what the service guarantees them. The distribution of the new CD Rom and how they would use it to set up their system and install new versions of VRV was also explained in the session.

Also discussed, were the new enhancements to the software, to include adoptions, and moving closer to current technology. The Oracle 8i database, and how we are getting closer to being Internet based was explained. The clerks were trained on marriage, births and deaths. Most offices sent two people. All the offices were to begin operating under VRV today.

They were all instructed to contact Mr. Wurtz yesterday or this morning to get numbers of their paper stock, so they could enter that into VRV. Greg Milligan is waiting by the phone if any issues arise. They all have to dial in to access the system and were provided with user Ids and passwords. They were shown the icon and stepped through the process, but there was no modem hooked up in the training. A packet of information was also distributed outlining the training they received. The Help facility of VRV was also demonstrated.

Ms. Little inquired as to whether or not there were any sites nearby that had been identified as resources for the new sites. Mr. Gerow explained that they are all hospital towns and far removed from one another. In the training, he did show a map of all the other cities and towns already using VRV and a listing of funeral homes and hospitals on the system. He also explained that they chose to bring these sites up with the understanding that they realize they have to be in control of the use of their phone line and the use of the connection to the Oracle database. The database has a timeout of 30 minutes. If the machine is left logged on for more than 30 minutes with no activity, it will lose the connection. That will save 6.5 cents per minute and free up lines for other users.

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Ms. Little asked about the original plan to have regional “experts”, that would help new users become more familiar with the program. Mr. Gerow, explained that it had been discussed, but nothing ever decided or undertaken. Ms. Little explained that she felt it was worth exploring further. Mr. Gerow said that it could be discussed at the next users meeting, which is coming up shortly. Mr. Bolton added that Sharon Dery had volunteered to coordinate the experts if the program came about.

Vitts Status:

Getting weekly reports on availability from Vitts, and the bandwidth requirements/usage information is remaining unchanged from the previous report. No major outages or complaints from users were noted. Availability has remained at nearly 100%. The problem with the Keene firewall still exists, but their firewall RFP is supposed to go out this month. Since we have been unable to resolve the problem, a new firewall would benefit us as well as Keene.

Mr. Gerow went on to report that the Vitts pilot program ended 12/31 and we are now responsible for paying the monthly Vitts fees. We now have six months to elect to keep Vitts or to select a new service provider. That would allow us time to transition smoothly to a new provider while maintaining the Vitts line for users. A Communication RFP needs to be drafted and as far as Mr. Gerow knew, it had only been discussed with the legal dept. Tom will be working on a statewide RFP with DITM and Administrative Services. He thinks that initially it will be written as a DHHS RFP that will be turned into a statewide RFP. He has a meeting planned, with DITM and NH Sun to see how to get that started. There are three state programs that have a need for connectivity.

Ms. Little inquired about a timeline for the RFP. Mr. Robinson replied that he would like it out for March and the VRV deadline is the end of June. Ms. Little then asked if it would then have to go before the Governor and Council for approval. Mr. Robinson explained that it would have to, as the vendors we would be dealing with are not part of the statewide service contract. The Governor and Council would get it after a vendor is selected.

VRV Application Upgrade:

Mr. Gerow reiterated that 278 errors were found and reported to Mantech on the new release. The biggest error was that the adoption upgrade was missing altogether and we had paid for that last spring. Mantech will add the adoption component. There are 60 errors still to be addressed and Mantech hopes to have those addressed by January 22. When the corrections are complete, they will send us a corrected version. We will check to ensure all the errors have been fixed to our satisfaction and then begin the user testing. Mr. Gerow estimates a mid February release.

Mr. Robinson wanted to make clear that all the errors discovered are not new, some have been there all along. Because Mr. Gerow and his team went through this version with a fine toothcomb, they found everything. Many of the errors just showed inconsistency. If there were buttons or prompts a birth, they should also be there in death. Only the first 15 or 20 errors were new.

Ms. Little asked how long after the user testing would the new version be released. Don said March at the earliest. They do want to make sure the version is clean, so we won't have to release another “corrected” version. Ms. Little and Linda volunteered to do user testing. Ms. Little asked for advance notice as she has some training coming up and needs to make sure there

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is office coverage. Mr. Gerow explained that if the disk is here early the testing might begin sooner, that we are flexible. Mr. Wurtz informed Mr. Bolton, that there is a list of people who had also volunteered to help with testing.

Mr. Andrew asked if the two requests from the Medical Examiner's office were included in this upgrade. Mr. Gerow was unsure, but Mr. Bolton confirmed that they were supposed to be included in this upgrade. Mr. Gerow added that to his list of things to check on the new disk. Ms. Little then asked how we would divvy up charges for the line between departments/agencies, if the initiative went statewide.

Mr. O'Neal replied that he wasn't sure about other providers but Vitts can provide us with usage for the lines and can tell us how much each agency is using. Mr. Bolton, asked if they can keep track what applications are being used? Mr. O'neil replied that yes, they should be able to. We can identify that at our district offices, so Vitts should be able to as well. Mr. Gerow added that they could also watch traffic and destinations. The provider could partition the bandwidth out to agencies.

Mr. Gerow is concerned about the idea of sharing costs. Because each department's usage will vary, some will use much more than others, yet all the departments will pay. The best solution is that the state, buy the line and charge the departments that use it. There are only three programs (Safety, UCCS, and VRV), that really need communications right now, four if you count Hand, but it will only be going to hospitals. We were supposed to provide a document that described our program and our needs. DITM would then combine the three documents to define and overall position on where we were going.

There was supposed to be a meeting on Tuesday, but Mr. Gerow didn't know if it had been held. The three programs are all actively looking at vendors. Ms. Little asked if voter registration had been discussed. Mr. Gerow replied that no, it hadn't, but they are aware a law had been passed and they need to prepare. The major problem is that Vital Records and Safety have programs that have been ready to go, we just need communication. The goal at this point is to define what our needs are. Mr. O'Neal said that if we have to do it ourselves, we will. Worst case scenario is we will write our own and the state will jump in. There is no way this program can go forward with modems.

Data Conversion:

Mr. Gerow explained that we have discussed data conversion before, but it never really went anywhere. When we started working with these six new cities and towns, it became an issue. We do not want them relying on the old software. It is difficult for them not to though, as they have five to ten years of records on the old software. As mentioned earlier, the users were asked to bring their old records with them to the training. We have saved those records to one of our servers.

Mr. Gerow looked at the records and noted that VRV has the capability to import deaths, births and marriages. The problem is each clerk has their own way of entering information, some used punctuation, some did not. Some didn't enter the town or street address. With some manipulation Mr. Gerow can make the information acceptable to VRV. It (VRV) does have specific criteria it requires to accept a record. In order to accept this data the files will need to be

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parsed. Mr. Gerow has written a dbase Clipper program to parse the information. It combines all the years into one database, massages it to make it acceptable to VRV.

Mr. Gerow massaged the information on 250 records and all but 10 were accepted. Those 10 just needed minor changes. The next issue is State File Numbers, the state did not begin using them until 1948. The 1860-1947 records will be read into VRV and will begin with an E instead of a 1. The E will indicate it is an electronic file and does not have a State File Number. The data in those files will be the minimum information required for an abstract.

The 1948–1989 records will be flagged with a C, to represent a converted file. The files are being converted but will not have a state file number and therefore be complete and cannot be used for a certificate. It does have a state file number, but the clerks do not have the actual state file number. The number is in the vault at Vital Records, but is filed there according to the state file number. To find it, one would have to look under the year.

Vital Records does have an Rbase program called R-index. Mr. Gerow has converted it to Power Builder application and has put it in the Oracle database. All state records are in this program. All the C records can be run against the program and it will give the potential state file number for some. For the other records that do not have a first name, or those that use an initial instead of a name, the program will show files with similarities to the record requested. The operator will have to determine which number is the correct state file number on the latter files.

Files will then be available to all VRV sites. This should help wean the new users off the AMC, ADC, and ABC quickly. After the new sites have all been converted we can then go back and get the Vitts and Pilot sites also. Because someone has to manipulate the data, it would be much less cumbersome if we convert one site at a time rather than trying to do them all at once.

Ms. Little asked if IT had removed the old software from the new VRV sites. Mr. Gerow replied that Peterborough had asked, but because all their data is still on the old system, no. They left it in case a record was needed. It will be removed once their data has been converted and is accessible on VRV. Ms. Little warned it is awfully tempting to leave it behind and many may use the old software because it is familiar. Mr. Gerow added that until we can give them access to their own data we need to leave the old software.

Upcoming events:

New build testing is coming up. He hopes to get the new release next week, and as soon as the testing is complete on that, it will be released. The communications RFP will have to be worked on and the effort at data conversion will also continue.

Ms. Little asked “where are we on the CIP Project?” Mr. Bolton asked Mr. Armstrong to comment on the project. Mr. Armstrong first asked Mr. Gerow for an estimate of how long User testing would take. Mr. Gerow was unsure, it depends on how much time user’s can spare. He thinks probably no more than one or two weeks. Mr. Armstrong also asked the committee to revisit the Communications RFP.

Ms. Little explained that the committee understands that we are drafting the RFP to meet our needs but that it may be expanded to include Safety and the Secretary of State’s needs as well. Mr. Armstrong stated that as long as Mark is communicating with the other interested parties and coordinating efforts with Tim Packey and Dennis LeClair. Mr. O’Neal mentioned that he had

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also been talking with Mark and that he was trying to set up a meeting with the NH Sun people. Mr. Gerow asked Mr. Armstrong if they prepare and present an RFP to DITM, are his people ready to approve it? Mr. Armstrong said that yes they are, That if Administrative Services is ready, they should approve it because it is multiple agencies. That would keep the singular agencies costs to a minimum.

Mr. Gerow asked Mr. Armstrong if that meant he was not supportive of DHHS going it alone, that it had to be a multi-agency project. Mr. Armstrong said that was not 100% true, they did want it to be a joint project. Mr. O'Neal acknowledged that it is preferable that this be a shared project, but Tom Towle also admitted that Administrative Services may not be able to coordinate this in our time frame. So Mr. O'Neal will work at it from both angles. Mr. Armstrong added that the conflict is the current voice and data contract we have with Bell Atlantic, which expires in two months, with maybe a 12 or 18 month extension. They are working on an RFP to go out to cover voice, data and video circuits, and the strategy hasn't been worked out, whether it goes out as one RFP with options or multiple RFP's. The timing is awkward but as long as all the parties are talking/working together, it should work out. The goal is to cut down costs by sharing.

Mr. Andrew asked about the date for releasing the RFP and having the contract in place by July, whether the timeframe still seemed appropriate. Mr. O'Neal offered that from a DHHS test standpoint, it is enough time, we are ready. However, he wasn't sure that it would be enough time for the other agencies. Mr. Armstrong said that he would bring up that issue with Tom. Mr. Gerow asked Mr. Armstrong to clarify his and the DITM's stance on our doing a single RFP for DHHS. Mr. Armstrong stated that he thinks they will be able to accommodate our needs one way or the other, but that close communication from here on out is very important. He also added there may be a legal conflict with Administrative Services putting out an RFP when they have a current contract with a vendor.

Ms. Little asked if Safety knew their communication needs, in terms of bandwidth. She expressed doubt that the UCC project would know their requirements. Mr. Armstrong agreed and added they use a web browser, which doesn't require a lot. It all depends on whether images have to go over the circuit or not. He doesn't think they have done any testing yet. Mr. Armstrong mentioned that we could put out the worse case, heaviest throughput, and just get vendors prices for different levels of use. The tricky part is to establish the approximate volume and securing the best price for it.

Mr. Andrew mentioned that Mr. Bailey, in the last meeting had spoken of an "e-commerce" RFP that would be put together in the spring. Mr. Bolton explained that it is currently in process. Mr. Gerow said that there is an RFP out there right now, to determine what design the state should take for web enablement. Vendors are being asked to determine what they think the state's needs are and offer how they believe the state should approach the web system, offering programs, equipment, demos and the setup.

Right now that RFP is out there and vendor conferences will be held next week. The selection will occur by the end of the week. There will be a pilot project, and Vital Records was offered. There are several on the table and none has been selected yet. Ms. Little asked who is issuing this RFP? Mr. O'Neal told her that HHS Information Systems is doing this RFP.

The expectation is that the vendor will provide us with a portal, allowing us to redo our web site, they will then do a web architecture for us and a proof of concept of that architecture. So some

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of the vital records or Bridges software may be web enabled as a proof of concept. Mr. Armstrong, explained the project is limited, in that it allows government to government or government to business only. It would not be government to citizen as that would require much heavier duty security.

He is not sure when an RFP will go out on that, but it is in development right now and is considered high priority. If we are to stay in sync with some of the strategies/plans we have now, we need to do that fairly quickly. He added that they are also readying an RFP to bring in a vendor to help them do a statewide Information Technology plan and one of the major strategic issues we are dealing with is E-Government.

They come up with a strategy and architecture. Part of what they will build on is what DHHS is doing with their E-Government. Even though there will be no government to citizen activity at this stage. We should have a statewide IT plan by next October and a strategy free government by the end of June is their hope. How all these initiatives work together is the question. If there is a vendor in place, you may be able to just submit a work order and say we need vital records web enabled. That may cut down the cost, it may not, they are just trying to coordinate it the best they can.

Mr. Armstrong reiterated it is not DITM's intention to hold up other agencies, if the state is not ready. All agencies need to do business and if all parties are not ready, the project will have to move forward without them. They do want to have a standard architecture in place so efforts are not wasted. He asked if it would make the committee more comfortable if DITM sent a memo with a clearer explanation of where things stand. It was agreed that it would.

Mr. Andrew mentioned that the capital budget request for web enabling VRV is in fiscal year 2002. He wondered if that was still a good place for it, based on the projected roadblocks. Mr. Armstrong asked if it wouldn't be possible to move the request to the second year of the budget. It was his impression that they don't mind it when expenditures are pushed back. Mr. Andrew was not sure how that is done and if it even can be. Mr. Armstrong said he would discuss it with Mr. Towle.

Ms. Little asked where is the CIP project and who is it before, if anyone? Mr. Armstrong explained that the Governor is putting her package together. Adding that the capital budget has already published, in December he thinks. The Governor's office is interested in being very clear on what should be bonded and what shouldn't, which would be operational funds. Mr. Armstrong thinks our project is a new enhancement and believes the Governor's office has signed off on it.

New enhancements are considered above and beyond normal operations. They are over and above \$50,000 which is generally the rule of thumb for a capital budget request. As far as DITM knows the request is being viewed as legitimate under the capital improvement fund projects because it is an enhancement, not operations. Mr. Armstrong sees it as an enhancement, and thinks the Governor's office agrees.

That will be presented to the legislature on February 15 and then they start their back and forth. Ms. Little asked if someone from this committee testify? Mr. O'Neal and Armstrong agreed that it would be a good thing to show support. Mr. O'Neal said that he could check to see when that item will be heard. Ms. Little added that she felt the Clerk's Association would probably want to

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testify as to their support of it. Mr. Armstrong suggested an official position paper from the committee.

3. Expenditure Reports:

Mr. Andrew that the committee had last looked at the expenditure plan last September and there hasn't been many changes, he wanted to keep the committee apprised of any changes in the support plan, how we project the future, how revenues are coming in and if they are meeting projections. He distributed a chart showing all the accounts and what expenses had been charged against them.

He pointed out the amount of revenue that has come in the last six months, adding that if this trend continues, the fund should complete the year with about \$800,000. That is approximately \$50,000 more than had been projected. That figure indicates we are on track with revenues, which is good news. Mr. Andrew went on to say that the rest of the report he had distributed showed the expenditures from the VRV fund for personnel, Mantech, and other expenses.

He then went on to discuss the support plan. It shows expected expenditures on equipment and contracts. Mr. Andrew met with members of the OIS team in the last week, to update any information on the support plan, but there was very little change. He advised the committee he planned to contact Mantech to inquire about their sales of software, and of possible refunds the fund can expect from them. He also explained that expenditures for the Vitts contract, for this fiscal year, are very low. The cost will rise dramatically next year. The estimated cost for next year are based on projections from last year.

Mr. Armstrong inquired as to what the amount for contracted technical support staff was for. Mr. Andrew explained it had been there from the beginning, before Greg Milligan and Melvin, so if we needed help we would have the money to hire Mantech to help. Mr. Gerow added that the number of positions originally requested has been cut back. Mr. Bailey wanted to leave it there as a placeholder. Mr. Gerow added that we may need another person in the field once we have the communications setup, to get sites up and to train.

Ms. Eastman asked how are we doing with the helpdesk calls. Mr. Bolton answered that they have remained constant. Each month accounted for only about 25 or 30 calls. Now that we have added six more sites, we will see what happens. Mr. Gerow added that some of the same people still call here rather than the helpdesk. It is important that we encourage them to use the helpdesk. People that have followed the correct protocol cannot be asked to wait while those that have not, receive assistance. She mentioned that there is a Clerk's newsletter that might be used to remind users to use each other as resources as well as the helpdesk.

3. Vital Records Maintenance Preservation:

Mr. Bolton reported that we have been sitting back waiting for a legislative subcommittee established under HB 1151 to provide us with a conduit for putting money into vital records support and preservation. We may need to revisit that. Dr. Mevers mentioned that the house passed House Bill 1151 that set up a subcommittee to study municipal records and how the state could approach assisting in their preservation. That basically put the Records Preservation subcommittee on hold.

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The committee held a round robin discussion in July and met throughout the fall. They aren't required to report and findings until 2001, so the study is still ongoing. They are aware of the line item in the budget and will come up with a recommendation for this committee soon. Dr. Mevers went on to say that he and Mr. Bolton have discussed bringing all the committees for records preservation together as they all have similar goals. It is mainly a matter of finding the time. He hopes to have something for the committee by the next meeting.

Dr. Mevers mentioned that his subcommittee is working from a report the consultant from Hampton submitted several years ago. That report is the basis from which his subcommittee is taking off.

Other Business:

Mr. Armstrong mentioned that they are doing a strategic GIS (Geographical Information Systems) plan for the state and although they have environmental data and E911 data, they do not have a great deal of demographic data, and he was unsure of historical data. It might be something for the committee to think about, as a new way to look at things. The condition of records might lend themselves to be put in a GIS system so you could/might see some patterns or trends we might not see otherwise. Who could benefit from that information, is something to think about.

Mr. O'Neal announced that Mr. Gerow has been promoted to a Technical Support Specialist VI which will ultimately mean he will transition out of Vital Records into the Networking Group. He assured the committee they would be left in the capable hands of Mr. Gerow's replacement, Mr. Mark Parris, who was recently appointed IT Manager. Unfortunately, because of a personnel shortage in Child Support Enforcement, Mr. Parris is currently needed there. He will be able to work with Mr. Gerow over the next few months to get a feel for the project. Mr. O'Neal assured the committee that Mr. Gerow will not be leaving immediately, he will be involved full time until the release. The committee offered its Congratulations to both Mr. Gerow and Mr. Parris.

Next meeting March 15, 2001

Seeing no other business the meeting adjourned at 11:17 a.m.