



MEMORANDUM

AGENDA ITEM #8f

DATE: OCTOBER 6, 2008

TO: COUNCIL MEMBERS

FROM: STAFF

SUBJECT: AUDIO AND VIDEO CONFERENCING FOR COUNCIL MEETINGS

At the request of the Board we are providing information relative to the use of audio and video conferencing for Council monthly meetings.

1. Voice conferencing services are available through MYFlorida Suncom. These services are offered by the Department of Management Services for state agencies and local governments. Participants require a telephone to access the service and join a meeting. An email is sent to the participant to reflect the meeting time and appropriate information to join the meeting. The Council has recently used this service for several meetings. There is no monthly service cost. Basic service is billed to the account owner at \$0.035 per minute/per participant. The Council is currently an account owner and we can use this service on demand for any meeting requirements.
2. Video Conferencing has recently become a more viable method of conducting business and communicating. Although it is a technology that has been around for four decades, it has only recently matured to the point where it is both affordable and recognized as an effective tool. The transfer of live video allows people to communicate effectively and manage their time and business relationships. Video Conferencing services are much more varied in scope because of scale of services offered. Video conferencing equipment needs to be available on both ends. The local counties that utilize video conferencing are using Polycom as a product of choice. Staff has contacted the counties and identified several locations where equipment is available.

A video conferencing system would allow staff to send live presentations, video, web pages or any other PC content to remote locations. The system proposed in this project uses dual channel technology which allows for simultaneous speaking; for video, the system employs a standard-based H.264 compression for high resolution images, movies or presentations. When connected to a computer, any PC content can be streamed over the conference system.

A cost savings could be realized if Council members have access to existing video conferencing equipment available in their area. Equipment would need to be available at the time of Council meetings. Counties may also consider purchasing additional equipment on their end to allow dedicated video conferencing. If not, then commercial sites would have to be rented to facilitate the meetings.

Overall cost would be offset for the Council by allowing fewer trips to locations that have video conferencing equipment. The Council would also be able to utilize the equipment for projects, training and collaboration with outside entities and recruiting.

Benefits for the Council and board members are:

- Travel Expense Reduction / Pure Travel Reduction
- Collaboration for other projects
- Training
- Lower recruiting costs

Recommendation:

Staff proposes the installation of a video conferencing system at the Council to allow board members to attend monthly meetings. Cost for the project will be between \$12,000 - \$20,000, depending on the final configuration. Video conferencing will reduce travel and expense for board members and the Council.