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[00:00:01] I'm going to go ahead and call this meeting of the Board's Information Technology Committee meeting to order. Got a pretty stacked agenda today, so we're going to take as much time as we need, but move through it quickly and efficiently at the same time.

[00:00:18] First up, we have a presentation on the FCPS Board of Supervisors IT Committee, Joint IT Committee update, and that will be followed by some discussion. Chairman, do you want to make any introductory remarks on this one?

[00:00:35] Just very brief, I want to thank the staff who's been working on this and importantly also the members of the Board of Supervisors and School Board who have been working on this in a collaborative manner because this is so important. It is very important for both from a budgeting standpoint but just from an efficiency standpoint.

[00:00:54] And I know it's taken a lot of staff time and effort. And these committees, they always look great on paper. Sometimes they produce good products. Sometimes they just take up a lot of time. And in this case, it looks good on paper and has produced some good results.

[00:01:11] And so I just want to thank the folks who have been working on that and just remind my colleagues that, you know, these are great opportunities for members of our two boards to get together

with staff and vet a lot of the issues that then our entire boards don't need to vet and bring forward good recommendations for efficiencies and improvements that we can make, in this case, both across the county and the public school system.

[00:01:34] So really just a word of thanks and encouragement and appreciation for the staff time that it's taken. County Executive Hill, you had a wave in your hand there. Yeah, thank you, Supervisor Chairman Harrity, and thank you for those words, Chairman McKay. And I want to thank Supervisors Stork and Alcorn.

[00:01:52] After this meeting is complete, we're going to also put together a net for expectations. So we all have it documented about what our next processes, our next steps will be. I want to thank Gotham and his team, as well as Alicia, Siri, McCormick, and all the folks that were involved.

[00:02:10] It is about collaboration. It's about making sure that our residents receive the services we provide at a high level. And I think we can do a lot of good work together if we can collaborate on a lot of the things that we're looking into. So I just want to say thank you.

[00:02:27] But the NIP will be forthcoming. Okay, Maura, I'm turning it over to you or is it Alicia? I get the honor this morning. Good morning. Welcome to the Information Technology Committee meeting. I am standing in for Matt Harrison today.

[00:02:43] Unfortunately, he had to have a medical procedure. He's doing well. He's recovering at home and he hated to miss the fun today. He may actually be watching, so that's the good news. So we're going to go through today the agenda that Supervisor Herity spoke to, which is the review of the Joint Board and Fairfax County School Board IT Committee meeting and the discussions and updates and recommendations that are coming out of that.

[00:03:04] We also will go over the affidavit board matter and where we are right now in terms of a status update, and we will go over the summary of the ITPAC letter to the board as well as a presentation by their chair. So joining me today to go through all of those agenda items are Maura Power, our Deputy Director slash Chief Technology Officer with the Department of Information Technology, Gautam Sethi, who is here from the Fairfax County Schools as their Chief Information Technology Officer.

[00:03:31] Anita Rao, our Deputy Director and Chief Applications Officer within the Department of Information Technology. And Sean Rastetter, our Chair of ITPAC, who will be doing the presentation for their letter and his thoughts on our budget and other things that we're trending on and the discussions there, as well as Guy Swo from ITPAC.

[00:03:49] So we're very excited to have everyone provide their input today and answer any questions that you might have. And as the county executive said, this discussion in particular as it relates to the Joint Information Technology Committee will inform that final report that we're going to send out. So we're really happy to hear any discussion or concerns or other things that you have for us.

[00:04:11] Thank you, Alicia. Thank you, everyone. And again, I also want to say thank you to the Board of Supervisors and the school board members who helped us participate on this joint committee. It really was a good effort in where we were able to actually work together. I think in the years that I've been here in the county, I haven't seen this amount of collaboration between our IT group and the school.

[00:04:29] So I think that was a benefit just from the get-go. So moving into what we did, obviously this presentation is focused a little bit around process, and then we'll get into kind of the findings and the outcomes that we have. So the joint committee, just to level set, was set up so that we could find operational efficiencies, so that we could find opportunities for ourselves to find some cost savings or some cost avoidances and to really look at our resources and how we can kind of optimize some of the resources that we have there.

[00:05:03] As we established this committee, we did start with a charter. So we used that charter to set our guiding principles, and we really wanted to make sure that we were using strategic thinking around our use of technology and our technology assets and services.

[00:05:19] We definitely wanted to be good stewards of the Fairfax County dollars and given the ongoing budget uncertainties, as we all know. We also, we are accustomed to having high quality IT services, and we didn't want to look at reducing any of those services.

[00:05:38] We wanted to make sure that we had a commitment to continuing with high quality services and high quality IT, as well as making sure that from a security and maintenance and from an innovation perspective that we're still underscoring those as principles.

[00:05:53] because, again, you know, we have to be very, very secure with all of our applications and all of the data that we work with, both in the schools and in the county. So moving on, you know, we had the work group, we actually, or we had the committee, we had to finalize and have a work group, right?

[00:06:12] So getting into the details, once the committee met, we took our additional teams of SMEs and we worked through really trying to dig into some details. So we reviewed our individual technology investments. We looked at renewal cycles for software, for hardware, and we did some in-depth discovery sessions with key vendors.

[00:06:34] I also want to underscore that a lot of the work that we did once we convened down into a work group was really -- it was supported by that SAP endeavor. So having a joint procurement system, which was something that this board has encouraged in the past between us and the schools really allowed us to do some deep analysis and deep understanding of where we're purchasing and what we're purchasing from an IT perspective.

[00:06:59] And I think from the leadership teams and both at the school side as well as on the county side, we also underscored with all of our teams, you know, you guys are in the day-to-day, you're working through work with your counterparts at the schools, learn from each other, talk with each other. And I think as we started to align that approach and siphon it down to all staff, we really started to see the teams dig in on being in this aligned approach.

[00:07:25] So continuing with our work group, we had a small sprint cycle in which we worked in. We started in October of 25, really starting going through meeting weekly, if not more. We engaged with some of our vendors as well, doing books of business reviews.

[00:07:44] Again, as I mentioned, we spent a lot of time working on the data analysis to align and to look at those products and services, the places where we did have overlap. And then we worked again with our different teams, having our SMEs talk with each other. As we worked through that, we then started to craft our strategy for how we were going to approach the cost optimization, which now I'm going to hand over to Gautam to go into more detail.

[00:08:09] Good morning. You can get to the next slide. As technologies often do, we took the very large task and broke it down into its subunits. What emerged was two distinct pathways, which we'll discuss a little bit.

[00:08:26] The tactical pathway, which was a quick sprint in the next two months, three months, to be able to come back with some cost optimizations. And then the strategic pathway, which led us into a longer journey to say, where do we go from here? What are the opportunities where we can intentionally collaborate and build future value for the county and the school division as a whole?

[00:08:47] Next slide. In our tactical pathway, we worked, as Mara was mentioning, overlaying large vendor purchases among the two entities. The goal was to force to be able to look at, say, if you're buying similar items, is there value in per unit pricing for those items? This could be hardware units. It could be software units. The also sought alignment on long-term objectives, where we were looking at how should we be architecting solutions in the future where, when permitted through regulations or through privacy requirements, we could share some entities and units of collaboration. An

[00:09:23] example that emerged was data centers. We have data centers within the county. It's run in an old elementary school building, which has been something that has supported us for a while, but we would love to have a modern enterprise data center approach, which can be a collaboration that we can work towards. You will also hear about some of these opportunities in the future slides.

[00:09:46] Two key among the structural was a user base that we serve as individual entities. Fairfax County public school serves about 250,000-ish, which includes 180,000 students, staff, and then a larger population, which is our parent community, which is also overlapping potentially with the Fairfax County government's community of service. And amongst 200 buildings which are spread over the county, FCG supports regulated environments. The key data privacy regulation and compliance needs require technology provisioning and support creates variance in our staffing loads and cost

[00:10:22] basis. Additionally, some of the vendors also emerged as saying that we have very distinct pricing strategies. What they may give to the school district as a school entity or an education entity may not be what they will offer as price points and strategies to a county government.

[00:10:39] Separate and distinct, and they came back with those as responses to our optimization questions. While the majority of technology investments at Fairfax County focus on ed tech, This is devices for students.

[00:10:55] As you know, every student, since the pandemic, has had a device issued to them when they need to use it. We also focus heavily on educational tools, so instructional tools in the classroom, which are used by teachers, or also student information collection databases, which will be very distinct and unique in Fairfax public school technology operations, as opposed to FCGs.

[00:11:17] We did engage with the largest providers of our business and office technology to both of us, Exploring opportunities for price consolidation and discounting. As I had mentioned earlier, the vendor, specifically that vendor, which was a larger sort of purchase across both our books, budget books, told us that they do not overlay and overlap the pricing points between us as a school district and the county government.

[00:11:41] Therefore, they would want to maintain them as separate books of contracts for both those entities. Thank you. Thank you. So I know he spoke to some of the things where we don't align. I'm going

to talk about some of the opportunities where we actually did find some alignment because I think that's where we find these efficiencies and these costs, avoidances and savings.

[00:12:04] So one of the major opportunities we saw was in that network infrastructure area. So when I'm talking about network infrastructure, I'm talking about routing, I'm talking about switches. And from there, we found that there were, we used the same platforms, right?

[00:12:22] So we're using the same tools, we're using the same hardware. However, we were actually approaching it across several different reseller contracts. So for those of you who aren't aware, IT operates a lot like car dealerships, right?

[00:12:37] So like the manufacturers, they're the ones that are making the cars, and you have to go to a dealership to buy it. The same thing happens with IT. We have folks who are creating hardware, who are creating software, and we have to go through resellers to actually purchase that software.

[00:12:53] So when we look at our network infrastructure, when we're looking at the hardware related to switches and routers, there were often opportunities with different price points, right? So maybe there was a different discountage percentage point that we were receiving, that the schools were receiving.

[00:13:12] So as we started with this committee, as we started with the intentional conversations, we were starting to notice those differences. And again, as we looked at the data from our SAP system, we found that for the same exact equipment, we were purchasing off of three different reseller contracts.

[00:13:30] So we had an opportunity to kind of align, to strategically come together. Now, the discounts aren't huge, right? So it's small dollars that we're working with, but it was still an opportunity. And as we go through this, every little bit helps is how I see it. You know, that's how we manage things at home as well.

[00:13:47] So every place where you can get that additional 2%, 3%, or whatever you can find, those were some opportunities that we found. Also around wireless access points, right? We're trying to put Wi-Fi, make Wi-Fi available for everyone in the schools as well as every, you know, the employees here in Fairfax County as well as the public.

[00:14:06] We're buying the same equipment, right? So we were able to work together. The schools have recently gotten a very good pricing point negotiating with one of the primary vendors for the wireless access points. And now we're able also to have that conversation with the same, they call them OEM, so original equipment manufacturer, about getting that additional discount just like them.

[00:14:29] So I think a lot of the vendors have seen us coming in as a joint team. You know, we might be two different IT organizations, but we're one county. And so I think seeing that for the first time with a lot of our vendors was something significant. Granted, there are those places where, you know, they're not going to align because there's the educational, you know, benefits.

[00:14:49] But we really did see a lot of economies of scale there. I think also one of the things that I want to add when we're talking about the other potentials was around SaaS products. So, we looked at the types of tools that we were using for monitoring, for digital certificates, and we found some opportunities there as well.

[00:15:11] Granted, we might be on different renewal cycles for certain licensing, but we've been able to find some opportunities where we might be able to align in the future. Also, looking back to cloud data platforms, you know, we're very focused on data and our data analytics efforts.

[00:15:27] We're focused on leveraging certain platforms for that. we talked with the schools, we looked at their strategy, what they're doing, and so we're also onboarding. This was a cost we were going to be spending anyway, and now we're spending it in the same trajectory in which the schools are going. This allows us also to have our staff, you know, learn from each other, right? So, like, we're learning the same, we're able to work closer together and really innovate together. So, I think those were some of the other really good opportunities that we found here once we started, you know, digging into the data. Additionally,

[00:16:01] We really focused on that operational efficiency, which we are mindfully doing on a regular basis. So we have multiple technology procurements underway. So we have several large RFPs, RFPs for staff augmentation services, where we've had representatives from both the schools and the county as part of that selection advisory committee.

[00:16:24] We're also sharing our cloud strategies, trying to find opportunities as well as we move forward with our different clouds and the different cloud platforms that we work with, aside from our own, you know, private cloud that we both maintain. And then we're also looking at joint application approaches.

[00:16:41] You'll hear about it a little bit later when we talk more from the impact side. But as we look at that unified customer experience, that is something that we, it doesn't matter if you're a parent at a school or someone coming to Fairfax County to register or to do an athletic field schedule, you want to be able to have that seamless customer experience.

[00:17:02] So we're looking for those other opportunities. Unfortunately, those are more in the longer term. However, the procurements are something that we're acting on right now. So next slide, again, just giving you some actual examples with a little bit of numbers. You know, we've seen growth from what the vendors have been willing to provide to us from 5% to 12% discounts increasing there.

[00:17:26] We've also been able to say, okay, if we're strategically purchasing this hardware, X hardware together, you know, how can we receive those economies of scale? knowing that it's not a small one-time purchase, it's multiple purchases, and it's multiple, you know, products that we're buying together.

[00:17:44] I think also we've seen vendors being more willing to work with us and to provide larger discounts for some of the, you know, emerging technologies that are already in our roadmaps. And we definitely have had an increased negotiating power when it comes to economies of scale.

[00:18:02] And I do want to underscore, like, they're small wins, but they're important because each little small win adds up. And, you know, we're in this process of really dealing with some soaring technology costs. As mentioned, you know, probably before in the budget presentation, IT costs are growing.

[00:18:24] And so by doing this, by being committed to being intentional about our collaboration, talking on a regular basis we're going to be able to help temper some of those rising costs and so finally kind of moving into what does our future look like so whereas I understand the Joint Committee was one point in time and we were you know aiming to you know have a culmination and a culmination report we're going to continue this collaboration right so the relationships are there relationships that we didn't know you know really existed much before we're We're going to continue to meet in April.

[00:18:57] We really do have significant long-term planning discussions that we need to have. As Gouda mentioned, the aging facilities in which we have our data centers, that's hardware, that's location. There's a lot that we need to talk through.

[00:19:12] We also, you know, we do have a private cloud, right, and that's reliant on that fiber. The fiber and the INET funding is based off of cable and cable bills. So as we know, more streaming services, that kind of thing. So all of these longer-term initiatives, we're going to really have to start coming together, understanding how we can work together to avoid some of those rising potential costs.

[00:19:38] And as mentioned, again, we're working through those joint RFPs and then our cable infrastructure. We're also approaching that one as well as a joint team. And I want to underscore the joint RFPs. Yes, there's still a lot of work, but that's time that we're getting back on our calendars.

[00:19:53] right? That's not two procurement offices going off and doing the same process and the same RFP. So we're saving time and effort and the expenditure from that standpoint. So we're not doubling efforts and reducing them. And oftentimes, I think we end up using the same vendors anyway. So this is really helping us save in the long run. And so with that, I know I ran through it rather quickly. I know there was a packed agenda. So that is pretty much all we have, and we're available for questions.

[00:20:21] Okay. Thank you very much. Before I go on, I want to do one introduction. I forgot to do one of the things when I took over the IT committee was to fill the FCPS seat. So we did that in July. Guy Swope, you want a two-second introduction?

[00:20:41] Yeah, my name is Guy Swope Been in the county for about 30 years been with a company called rtx Raytheon for about 30 years I support the CTO there directly and now supporting the ITPAC Helping represent FCPS on that particular committee. Thank you for that. And with that I will Jeremy have any comments and questions I'll save mine to the end. Yeah, I got just a couple questions and and my only comment is is you know again thank you for the presentation and the work i think the only other comment i'll make is is one that you referenced which is what i was i personally was largely hoping to get out of this

[00:21:17] besides efficiencies and savings was a built relationship uh between the county and schools because honestly that has been too uh segmented in the past there have been walls up um you know having lived through the the covid pandemic we saw a lot of that really clearly um you know where where there were just walls between county and schools that were unnecessarily built.

[00:21:42] And taking those down requires relationship building. And so I'm very hopeful that this continues. The committee will finish its work and be long gone, but the cooperative spirit between schools and county continues. And that's what our constituents expect and just assume that we're doing as a best practice.

[00:22:00] And so that's my only comment of appreciation for that. I did have a couple of questions, But whenever I see somebody go to green, that means they want to say something. So let me let Alicia, if you wanted to say something on that point. I did want to highlight that.

[00:22:15] One of the things we've really enjoyed is working with God and his team and Maura and Matt. We really just talked about the fact that that has been essential to our success going forward. It's built a foundation for us for continued cooperation, for enterprise-level discussions. And I really have appreciated that. And I think it's essential right now for all of us to sit down and think through things because we are facing insurmountable challenges both from the rising cost of things, but also just the complexity of all the things that we're trying to juggle.

[00:22:40] So working together and utilizing our core expertise will make us that much better. So if nothing else comes out of the joint committee, which other things will, but the main thing that's coming out of it is that collaboration and relationship building. And unfortunately, Godam can't get away from us. So that's the good news, and I don't think he wants to at this point, but we're really excited about that.

[00:22:58] And we appreciate it also -- I didn't say that at the beginning -- the board members from both the county board and the school board that work together because you provided support for us as well. So Supervisor Alcorn and Sork, and then Supervisor Sizemore Heiser, who started as a school board member but moved over, and then Sandy Anderson and Seema Dixit from the Fairfax County Public School Board because all of those things have really helped us. Your collaboration together as well as our collaboration is just setting us up for continued success. So thank you, Chairman, for putting this board matter forward.

[00:23:25] Sure. Thank you. And the one question that I do have, and then I have a request maybe is the best way to put it. The question in terms of the vendors, a lot of this is written in a way that makes it sound like we're getting enhanced opportunities within the existing vending pool that we already use. And I know the OEM thing was brought up before, but I guess without naming names, what I'm interested in is, are we hearing from vendors outside of our normal pool? Are we open to talking to new people about new technologies, about ways to cost-save.

[00:24:04] This is not pointed at any particular entity, individual, or agency, but I have heard overwhelmingly from the private sector that the barrier of entry for new technologies is pretty high in the county and that there seems to be, at least through the procurement process, loyalty to what I would call legacy procurements.

[00:24:27] And, you know, again, I don't want to do procurement. I don't even want to know the names. I want to get a sense that the county's doors are wide open and that this new working relationship, stronger working relationship with schools is opening the door to potentially new and more interesting and maybe cost-saving vendors.

[00:24:47] And if nothing else, what they do, of course, is drive down the cost with some of the legacy vendors that we do have. And so can you give us a sense of how this effort might enhance that? Yeah. To speak to that, we did, because our scope was narrow on current spend and what we know, which is in our, like, current roadmap of this year in FY27, we were focusing a lot on the current vendors that we work with. But in the discussions, there are different platforms and different, you know, technology services that both the schools use and that we use where we are looking to align and talk about new ways and new pathways. So I think

[00:25:24] we are open. We're definitely interested in hearing from a lot of the vendors because, again, to your point, we had a lot of good competition when we're open to having that discussion. That does help. So we really, I think we're both open to it. I think we're trying to also make sure that we have those economies of scale when we're going into those conversations. As Maura had originally mentioned, the car ownership overlay, right? So some of the vendors or the resellers we were speaking to, they recognize that they can bring the same OEMs to us, but now they are trying to compete with each other. I think

[00:25:59] we started signaling that we are one entity, which also then meant the vendors trying to compete with each other. We had on some of our calls, one of the vendors saying, hey, if you want to change the book of business to shift everything from the other reseller to us, we'll likely be able to get you larger discounts. So that is the beginning of the conversations. Obviously, you want to navigate this with

procurement hand in glove, but that is happening already. Yeah, I think that's really important because it's one thing to negotiate a better deal with an existing vendor. It's another thing to use your buying power to get more people interested and drive down costs even more and be open to, you know, thinking about things outside the box. And so I think the message we need to

[00:26:36] have out there is our doors are open and where there's an opportunity to compete, something we're going to compete it because we have new buying power now that we're going to use. We've had it before but we have it even in greater numbers now. And then my request, I guess, would be when you're looking at these opportunities to never lose sight of, in some cases, maybe we describe it as the end user, but I would say our customer because our kids are frustrated, our parents are frustrated about all the different systems and all the different logins and why our systems don't talk to each other on the school side. Our residents are frustrated that, you know, they can't use the

[00:27:14] same platform to do multiple things in the county. I'm hoping that we're giving thought at the end of this to not only simplicity inside our government and school operations, but massive simplicity on the outside so that our users get a quality experience here. I mean, as a parent of two kids in FCPS, I still don't understand why they can't get a student ID that has a library card on it, has a Fairfax Connector user card already built into it because they're eligible in middle and high school and why they have to go three different places, or why when we looked at

[00:27:49] trying to introduce fees for the SAC program, that one of the answers we got was that would be too hard to be able to implement because our NCS system would have to start talking to our SAC system, and at the end of the day, a parent just wants to go one place and transact all of that business, and so I hope that the efficiencies are internal, but they're also external so that our end users, customers, in our cases, our residents can get a benefit out of this as well. And that's my main request when we're looking at these things, to never lose sight of

[00:28:20] that piece. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for both those questions. The legacy system thing, something that we're clearly heard and clearly working to overcome. And the focus on customer, we get a little bit of an update on the customer portal a little bit later. With that, let me just go down the line with super well we'll start with the two co-chairs supervisor Alcor thank you very much I do want to thank staff and and really this I think was a super helpful effort on a number of different levels and I know the the

[00:29:00] purpose was narrow and focused and I'm glad that was retained but I think we're seeing now there are some longer-term things and benefits to both systems that that are going to, I think, reap benefits very much. And I appreciate very much the chairman's comments just now.

[00:29:19] Hopefully, we can move more towards the back-end integration. And I realize there are data and privacy issues there that will have to be worked through over time. But thinking about more of a customer focus in terms of our residents, I couldn't agree more, you know, moving more towards that.

[00:29:39] The other piece in terms of talking about purchasing power, I think it's important to note that we actually have an advantage in the public sector that the private sector does not have. Frankly, the county and the school system can team up and increase purchasing power. We don't have to worry about antitrust.

[00:29:57] So frankly, I mean, this is something for the public benefit. So it is something I would encourage, you know, us to continue to do. And thinking about this over the longer term, I think they're

probably – I'm not saying we're not going to keep this committee going, but ITPAC, I think, has a real opportunity to continue this momentum and to continue to provide input and encouragement for more integration and more efficiency.

[00:30:29] So hopefully that also could be in the cards. So thank you very much. Yeah, and I agree with you on the ITPAC comment. And I think we're going to see a little bit of that a little bit later today. Supervisor Stork, did you have anything? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

[00:30:44] And I just want my colleagues to really understand or at least appreciate what we appreciated, which was this incredibly well-run committee support.

[00:31:01] And the Deputy County Executive is here, Connor, just well done. I know Ms. Powers and you guys, it really was just incredibly well done, worked together. We were well, I think well briefed, but more importantly, we had the opportunity to ask the questions.

[00:31:18] And I think automatically the way that it boiled down, I was kind of looking in page seven, I think this is clearly where we saw, I know you all brought this to us, but we saw automatically the core elements of that, which is the technical short-term side, which I think we're seeing a lot of that here, but also see the strategic side, which we know is maybe a real big bucks opportunity, but maybe not even so much big bucks, but is big service improvement opportunities, which is, in the end, if we use IT right, I know you all know this better than any of us, it saves money that we don't even know that we've saved

[00:31:56] money on because it's just stuff that changes over time because, frankly, our customers are doing frankly more of the work but feeling better about it because they're able to do it more easily and effectively and then even calling a line or whatever and getting that support.

[00:32:13] So I think those are key parts that I wanted especially to let obviously tell all of you but also make sure our colleagues understand that and Mr. Chairman of the board I think the sense that you had in putting this together I think was right on and I think we're seeing some of those benefits. So, I think I want to particularly congratulate you, Jeff, for that foresight, and I think we're seeing that. I know that we have some other opportunities still, and I guess I wanted to understand maybe a little bit better, how do you see the discounts coming

[00:32:50] forward? I mean, we have small discounts, you know, 5 or 10 percent. Are there bigger opportunities, savings to get, obviously, a better outcome for our residents, whether it's services, but even more importantly, the cost of operations for us? I would say, just listen to the comments today, right? It's going to be twofold. There will be the hard cost savings, which will be the discounts when we have shared overlays of technology or hardware or services. But the value generation is probably going to be the long-term question here. How do we generate value for our citizens,

[00:33:27] for parents, for community, by sharing these resources. I think that value has not a cost basis to it, but has an output basis which enhances the services because that's what we all do. In public service, we are essentially creating the technologies to serve the needs of the purpose of the organization.

[00:33:46] In our cases, delivering education, preparing students for the future in that same realm, making it easy so our diverse communities can engage with the technologies that we provide. We have multiple pathways through that. And we start thinking through in terms of architectural alignment, which is where the deeper conversations are, right?

[00:34:03] Because we have our own plumbing. FCG has their own plumbing. When you bring these two things together, you have to spend some time connecting the dots. I think that value in the next few months or a year is going to help us start looking at what does the future plumbing look like for the entire county, which ensures that information can flow through but also be gated where it needs to be for privacy and security purposes.

[00:34:25] should we think about capturing that at least so, again, so our customers, really the folks of Fairfax County, understand that. I mean, it's kind of like going back to Chairman McKay's comments earlier about they see 66 new positions.

[00:34:44] You know, how can we help them understand how we are doing this and what it can mean for them? They may see it in their use, but so I want to capture some of that, if you will, savings as well as I want to use that to leverage more, frankly, costs, discounts in lots of different ways.

[00:35:05] Is there a particular way that we can quantify that, if you will, a performance indicator that we can look at that we can say here's what this was and here's – we thought we'd get X percent and we can get X plus Y percent? I mean, I think we can start looking at that and really come to it from like a KPI perspective because I think that is really what you're asking for.

[00:35:27] So there is some sort of metric or a way in which the public can understand how we're realizing the benefits of this effort and the benefits of our continued collaboration. You know, I will make sure to add some comments around that into our NIP about how we plan on moving forward, especially how we plan on moving forward within the next year and then how we'll move forward kind of beyond that.

[00:35:50] Because I do think we're going to have to come back to you guys and kind of give you an update on some of those things. I think you'll see as well the discussions that are coming up in some of that long-term planning, right? So the data center conversation, aligning our architectures, the plumbing that Gautam was speaking to, those are going to be potentially, you know, large, I think, investments at one time.

[00:36:12] And so, therefore, we'll be able to be, like, preemptive with some of the, you know, what does that mean to the community? How does working together help us improve that experience for them? And Gautam alluded to it as well.

[00:36:27] I do think that customer experience is a big piece. And you saw in one of the examples, athletic field scheduling. People don't care if it's a school field or a county field. And so just that one simple thing would be something we could show as it relates to a way to be more efficient and effective and make their life a little bit easier as they integrate with or interact with Fairfax County.

[00:36:46] I don't know how we capture that. I'd love to find a way to capture that. And I've got to believe there's industry measures to capture that that might at least give us a sense of how we're doing in relation to other ways of approaching it. And I know a key part of what I think made the committee work so well, I know for the three of us, was that collaboration on your whole part?

[00:37:10] I mean, that was huge. We would not have gotten as quickly where we got without that support. So I wanted to reemphasize that and also say, well, how do you make sure we continue that? We have, obviously, we have a school board, we have a superintendent in that administration, and obviously we have our own.

[00:37:29] What are you doing? What are the tools, mechanisms to ensure that that collaboration continues? And I realize I've spent a lot of time, but I'll make that my last one. So we have already committed to continuing to meet every other month. Again, working on our scheduling, just making sure that we can do every other month.

[00:37:49] At first we discussed quarterly, but I think that would, it would be too far away, right? So we want to at least connect in April, talk about the schedules then, and then continue on every other month to make sure that we're continuing to collaborate. And that is where we've committed now.

[00:38:06] but I do think as we work on different projects and different items like the athletic field scheduling system, the schools and the team in the county are going to be talking on a more frequent basis. So a kind of high-level meeting at least every other month, smaller teams working together on a day-to-day basis.

[00:38:22] I mean, our networking team right now, they're talking with the school's networking team, I think, regularly. Should we expect to see a work product? I'm not trying to micromanage, but just in general, will we see some kind of work product at the board level from that and periodically?

[00:38:41] We can add it into our IT committee updates if that's right. I had written down a couple things I was going to talk about later, but I think an update to ITPAC and then we'll do an update in this committee at some future time.

[00:38:56] We'll have to figure out what makes sense for that, leave it a little bit flexible. but I would expect within a year we'll be back here talking about this and the steps towards the strategic that we've made since we've done the procurement. So I will take that as an action as the IT chair to make sure it comes back here, put it on ITPAC Chair Sean Rassletter to get it to his committee at some point in time.

[00:39:24] And there's interface there. ITPAC's report was excellent. And part of the reason I'm honing on that is that 20 years ago, I was chairing the school board with Sharon Boliva, and we put together Smart Services, Smart Savings. We got some of this, but it quickly kind of fades, and that's why this is so important to continue to find a way to do this.

[00:39:44] So thank you all very much. We'll stay on top of it. We'll come down here and then work down the line. Supervisor Smith? I figure the NIP is going to provide more meat on the bones of what the collaboration is. And I'm really happy to hear that the IT groups from the schools in the county are working together. But when you start to talk about these other areas, like fields and all of those pieces, we have a natural tendency to hold on to what we do. And so I think that is going to be a big part

[00:40:19] of this issue, how you talk to people in different departments to get us to the place where we can make changes that are better for the whole community. So I'll be curious to see how that work moves forward. Data centers always come up and I know, you know, schools and data centers and buildings. What kind of process do you look at to come to a different place for that? Is it just hardware? Is it software? Have you even started to flesh out that process? We've talked through a couple of those components. It is hardware. It is software. We all, we both use

[00:40:57] the same virtualization software, and there are some things that are happening in the industry around that virtualization software. So we know it's an issue. We know it's coming. So we've had, I mean, that was one of the conversations we had very early on. It's just around the planning, right? Because we're, I think, about 18 months out from our renewal. I'm not, I don't totally remember where they are on their

renewal. But so we do have, we have some leeway up to that planning, but it is the hardware, right? It is the actual servers and the machines that we're talking about. It's the software that we have to run it. So as we enter into those next few months, that's going to be one of the leads of our conversations. If I could add, I think the

[00:41:35] larger focus for us is the continuity of operations from a disaster recovery perspective, right? We all recognize the times we are in are challenging, and we all recognize that we are in a location which can have an impact, large impact on community services. And unfortunately, not much works without technology. I mean, classrooms can work. Obviously, teachers can be in the building serving the students, but getting the students to the school, which requires technology, buses, GPSs, lunch, even requires technology to get delivered. So we recognize all of those things. And I think the larger conversation we want to have with the county, because we share the same INET connections, which was a huge investment. So kudos to the county in kind of

[00:42:14] working collaboratively. And this was decades ago, so I certainly wasn't here. But that I've seen in other school divisions become such a challenging cost basis for school districts and for the counties. But the fiber network that has been put together is something that is yielding rewards for decades and will probably continue to. But using the same fiber, we can host our data centers in the same facilities. We have some separation due to federal requirements in terms of privacy and data, but it doesn't stop us from going to a co-location vendor or some other space and say, hey, how can we get a better pricing strategy for both of the individual entities to come together in one physical space.

[00:42:51] So the last one, I don't need a lot of details now, but AI is coming up and analytical tools. Are there plans to look at that? Is there any coordination there? Yeah. I mean, we are in the thick of things. Students have figured out how to use technology, and they're moving fast.

[00:43:10] We ran a recent competition. We were really, really excited to see the student thinking where they were using AI to solve community problems. They came back with how to find housing and food quickly using AI tools, making them multilingual, servicing the diverse needs.

[00:43:25] They were really, really powerful examples. I wish I could show what we did. This was a three-month competition we ran with the students. But there are some of those opportunities where we want our future generations to be able to learn to leverage this technology, but then also our current workforce to be able to use them for productivity gains.

[00:43:40] I think near-term value is finding value for the productivity gains, which will come from the workforce adapting to it. One thing we shouldn't be discussing, and I imagine the IT PAC committee talks a little bit about this, AI implementations, they seem exciting and fast, but when it hits real people and real process and real work, it's a very complex, long change management strategy.

[00:44:04] So anybody who does projects, change management is where things go to either go away forever or get done. And I think our goal is to kind of capture the essence of our work and collaborate with the county to ensure that we can share our best practices on change management for the adults, at least, to start using this technology to meaningfully improve our outcomes.

[00:44:25] Thank you. Thank you. I'm going to go back to your first comment, the field scheduling, because it's really hard to give up your own. In Henrico County, and they do a really good job of this, and

your athletic director is familiar with this, but that's all their scheduling is done by their sports commission, not by their parks department or by their school system, school fields and other fields.

[00:44:49] So it can be done. There are models out there, but it's difficult not to want to hold on to your own, and that's some of the struggles you guys are going to have to go through as we move forward anyway. It's not easy, I know that. As God has said, change is hard. Change is hard, so that's where we're also going to leverage our county executive and our superintendent to help us kind of move that forward.

[00:45:10] Thank you. And thank you for this work. I enjoyed participating when I was on the school board on this. And so my last meeting on this was in December. So I'm very excited to see where the work has gone from there. So just a couple of comments. I think, you know, in slide 11, when you talk about some of the opportunities in detail, one of the things that crossed my mind is that we, you know, so much of our IT infrastructure impacts other functions, right, and is utilized by other functions.

[00:45:36] So if you're moving forward, there may be a space to bring in some of the experts of other functions, especially where our functions don't have as much impact from the student privacy and the FERPA and the other legal constraints on the school system, right, HR, transportation, facilities, maintenance.

[00:45:53] There may be some spaces to look at how IT can not just what we're currently doing, but help improve those functions, and we can move forward that way in a joint way, right? So you look at it as automation and the use of IT gets infused and the athletic fields is a great idea. But I think bringing some of those experts into your meetings to talk about what are your functions and how can we support on an IT side and how can we do that jointly might be something to look for in your future meetings as you're looking for savings.

[00:46:19] I couldn't emphasize more importantly what the chairman said about the relationships, the importance of the relationships. I will just say having been on that seat, you know, until the end of 2025 and now in this seat, I think there's a lot of great opportunity in the schools understanding more and having more visibility in what the county does and the challenges and opportunities.

[00:46:40] And on the flip side, for the county to have understanding of the schools and challenges and opportunities, and I think these types of committees, I'd love to see more of that, right? Because I think as you all talk and you're experts, you also see areas for improvement in knowledge and experience.

[00:46:55] Knowledge is power is what I always say. So I'd love – thank you to the chairman for this. I'd love to see more opportunities like this. I love that you have the longer term – I talked about this a lot during the committee around data analytics, AI tools training, and joint training and opportunities. So there might be some space to work with HR, especially the training functions in HR, especially as technology is getting more embedded as we're looking at more automation of functions.

[00:47:19] So just wanted to bring that up. And I think the thing I would just leave you with is that I love that we're looking at current, but as you're looking at user experience, as you're looking at that seamless experience for our joint constituents, And as you're looking at how are we moving forward in the functions of the two governments, how do we make them more combined and seamless together, and how do we continue this collaboration with new items and not just what we're currently doing.

[00:47:49] But thank you. I'm really excited to see this after the work we did. And I miss you guys. Supervisor Lesk saw your hand. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'll also echo the comment that I really

appreciate the work that's being done by this committee and really acknowledge that the joint effort is going to produce eventual cost savings and reductions.

[00:48:13] I hope that at some point we are able to identify a goal around that cost savings and reduction. I think that's going to be really important if we can do that. The question I'd like to ask is, just thinking about this initiative, has it been done in any other jurisdictions, either in the region or in the country?

[00:48:33] And just trying to see if there might be some learnings that we could gather from those efforts in terms of how they were able to bring the schools and the county or the city into alignment as it relates to procurement and some of the other initiatives that we're talking about here.

[00:48:54] Off the top of my head, I have not done any research in that area, but I do think that is something that we can benchmark and look at because that would be fascinating to see. I mean, we often learn from many other counties as is in the technology industry, so taking that as an action item I think would be great.

[00:49:13] No, no, I was just thinking there might be an opportunity because there might be lessons that they've already kind of gone through that we can kind of extract and maybe learn from to advance the work that we're trying to do here. So I appreciate that response. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

[00:49:34] My apologies. I didn't think I had a question, but I do have one follow-up. And a little bit of this is having worked on human services, and I remember my time in Denver, how the systems were so integrated, so much so that the community health provider could tap in to see what was done in the public hospital and be able to address changes.

[00:49:53] So I believe there are maybe 11 systems at the state level for human services. So that seems like a more complex area, but where there is, especially through CSB and human services, CSA, more areas where there is overlap with our student population, but also risk or challenges.

[00:50:14] So I don't know if that's one we've even started that conversation yet, or if it's a little bit complex. Like working so not with the schools, but working specifically like with the Department of Family Services around a lot of that data or working with coordinated services planning or the CSB, like there are a lot of federal protections and regulations that kind of prevent us from doing some of that work.

[00:50:38] As mentioned before, when we said there were certain things that we cannot do, that does take additional support with our county attorneys to really evaluate where can we actually have some of those integrations. So it would be great to see those other places where they actually do it.

[00:50:54] What are they doing? What laws are helping them support that type of work? But we're not there yet. Okay. And I guess, yeah, my only thought is to continue that conversation. I don't know what's happening under the new administration at the state level, but if there are opportunities where we are able to be in those conversations to help direct some of that work and bring our knowledge base of being the largest county with probably the most complex system and dealing with them.

[00:51:26] I don't know if that's something we're doing. Yeah, I was going to lean in and say one of the things we've been doing for years with our human services team is kind of understanding where we can break down some of those barriers with keeping the security and compliance and regulatory and privacy things still in place, but ensuring that we have that kind of seamless handoff of the baton to make life a little bit easier.

[00:51:43] So we are actively working that and we'll continue to work with that with the state in terms of where they are with the changes that they're implementing as they see the ways to utilize AI, utilize new systems, new technology to ensure that privacy is maintained, but you can still create that intersection of experience for people.

[00:52:00] Because it's one person and you can create kind of a unique ID to pass the baton from one place to the other without it being a privacy-related release. But those are things we've talked about for a while. And I would be remiss if I didn't say, even though change is hard and we will leverage things to make sure people change with us, We will be continuing to work with our partners to understand their needs and requirements.

[00:52:18] We don't do things to them. We do things with them. And so I want to ensure that anybody watching this today doesn't think that I've changed my stance with them as it relates to working. Yeah, I appreciate it. I mean, technology is here to serve the people, right? And so the more we can make that move slowly to move quickly I think makes sense.

[00:52:38] And then hopefully Daryl will help us down in the state now that he's down there. Thank you for your work. Okay, with that, we're going to get the NIP. It's going to give us a lot more of the details that should be out later this week, next week, end of the month.

[00:52:57] Okay, so we will be seeing that soon, and I'll make sure we keep this on the agenda for a future IT committee meeting. With that, I'm going to have the board get a very, very brief update on the disclosure, affidavit disclosure process.

[00:53:16] We've probably hit some snags that I'm actually going to personally get involved and may look at some of you to get engaged too, but go ahead, Anita. Thank you. Thank you. Good morning. Yes, I just wanted to provide a quick update on the modernization of the affidavit disclosure process.

[00:53:34] Not an exciting topic like the Joint IT Committee discussion, but this is some status update that I did want to provide. This is a process the Board had identified as requiring improvement due to some of the inefficiencies. The current workflow requires handwritten submissions that creates inconsistent data and increased risk of human error and also a lot of manual processing. So to address these challenges, the cross-functional team with members from planning and development, county attorneys, and IT collaborated to rethink and automate this process. So what I am pleased to

[00:54:12] share that came out of it was first the current PDF has been fully converted to an online web-based form that will guide users through the process. This will, once the user input is completed, this will enable the users to generate a standardized PDF. They can print it. It can be notarized and submitted. We've also identified a point in time verification that will ensure that the data that is notarized and submitted matches what the system generated, which I know was one of the concerns we talked about at the last IT meeting. And the team has also developed

[00:54:47] Power BI dashboards to support board staff in reviewing affidavits and the relationships. Finally, the team also completed multiple rounds of user testing with our internal users as well as our partners in the community. So the modernization has significantly advanced with the core automation are already completed. So that leads us to our current state and what the next steps are. The last user testing was completed last week with industry partners, and there were some unique use cases and workflow nuances that were identified that was not discovered earlier

[00:55:25] on. And this, of course, requires additional collaboration with our county attorneys and our planning and development staff to ensure that we figure out what the gaps are in the system and refine and revisit that process. So as we continue to collaborate, I think in parallel, the team is going to be reaching out to your offices this week to have a walkthrough of the process we have so far, share the dashboard so you can provide feedback and help to support a smooth transition.

[00:56:00] So in the next step, I think to remain agile and after the engagement with the board officers and get sign-off from the team, we can do a beta release and have that run in parallel with the current process so we can get feedback from the real industry to see how this process is working.

[00:56:21] And so we can incorporate those enhancements, do user testing and release in a second version, but this approach will also help us be responsive and be flexible. move forward. So there is some process refinement, but we need to revisit and I can have if Tracy or county attorneys want to add to it, I will open it up for them.

[00:56:42] Not much to add except that we are working with our development partners who submit these and submit very complex ones. So we're trying to make sure that in the process of making it easier for you all to use, we have not made it harder for them to use. So that's what we're working with them on now all right i'm going to hold my you got anything on this um i well first i you know i appreciate the the work that will have to happen with board offices i i may be different than

[00:57:20] my colleagues here i've been suspect of this from day one because i i don't think it's ever going to take away some of us at least feeling like we still have to go through the manual process because the recourse, if there's a mistake made, is significant and it's on us personally as board members.

[00:57:41] And so, you know, I don't know how much time and effort is going to have to continue to be put into this. I'm going to look at it as a redundant system. I guess at this point for me, the ease of the applicants submitting their data and making it easier for them is the primary benefit to me at this point.

[00:57:57] This may have started out with making it simpler for board offices, But given the concern I have about the consequences of making a mistake for us as individual board members, I think at this point we should be focusing a lot of attention on making the process easier for applicants to come in and submit their affidavits and for staff to process them and get them to the board offices in a timely manner might be a laudable goal at this point.

[00:58:22] But I just still remain suspect. I'm going to say the technology appears to be working and done. Now it's the process piece, and that's been, I think, a little bit put on IT to do when really I think we need a team looking at it, but we will get that moving.

[00:58:46] I think this will be a good double check, if nothing else, to go to your thing. It is there are serious concerns if we do this wrong. Any other questions? They're not just serious concerns. There's a misdemeanor.

[00:59:03] So thank you. It would be jail time. Any other questions? Wow, that killed that conversation with the jail time did. Now I'm going to turn it over to Sean Rasslettler, who is the chair of the Information Technology Policy Advisory Committee.

[00:59:29] For kind of a dual thing, he's going to talk about the letter, the PAC letter that we get every year, which was substantially different this year than it has been in many other years, and a little bit about

industry trends. So with that, I'll turn it over to Sean.

[00:59:45] Great. Thank you. Thank you, supervisors and staff. Thank you for being here. Never really been accused of being brief, so I will attempt to do that for you. I know that I'm sitting between you and your lunch, so thank you for the opportunity to be here. A little bit about what a PAC does. You can kind of think of us as like your personal tech scouts in a way.

[01:00:02] I would say that we're essentially the people that fixed our neighbor's Wi-Fi's enough times that we got drafted into doing it at a larger scale for the county. And, you know, the reality is that we've got some incredible people on this team. IPEC has professors, executives, people with industry experience of 40-plus years.

[01:00:23] We have a new member actually joined who a very long time ago actually served as the CTO of the county school system. So we have that incredible institutional knowledge. He was there last time we had these kind of conversations and could help kind of bridge the gap of what went wrong last time.

[01:00:39] So just an incredible team. I want to thank primarily all the team, but especially Kathy Walsh, who's our vice chairman, and then our program director, Brian, for putting together this letter in conjunction with everyone else. This really is a very cohesive and, I think, well-articulated letter. I'll try to do my best to walk us through what the letter entails and kind of give you a little bit of a background of where we're coming from, where the industry is going, and what we're seeing for trends, and then really just be a voice for some of staff, some of the things that they've mentioned, so you can be aware of some of the issues they're dealing with.

[01:01:11] So I think we can maybe go to the slides if we have them. Perfect. Okay. So what we're showing here is essentially three things. You know, we're in full support of the county executive's \$11.9 million proposal for IT enhancements.

[01:01:34] Obviously, this is a timely conversation given the budget conversations you're having. A large portion of this funding, I would say, is not necessarily directed to just new things. This is baseline funding required to maintain security, reliability, foundations that we've already built, and essentially sustain funding that, you know, without having would result in future infrastructure gaps and problems for services for our county, right?

[01:02:01] That being said, there's a lot of things here that I think will vastly benefit the county constituents and the services that we can provide. And we'll get into some of those things like customer portals and monetizations. The other two things that you'll see on this slide is bringing IT to an optimal state.

[01:02:21] We've got operations all across the county that are of varying ages. Some of our physical hardware are, you know, decades old. And a lot of our systems are not in the cloud, right? So that requires improvements to those. The other thing I'll mention is cybersecurity is not one of those things that's a one-off, right?

[01:02:39] It's not an investment that you pay. You know, it's not like a vehicle that you pay for at once and you drive it until the wheels fall off. Cybersecurity is one of those things that you really have to continue, almost like a subscription, paying for. And it's one of those things where, you know, you know right away if you got it wrong, and you won't necessarily know if you got it right, right?

[01:02:58] If you haven't heard of things, you're probably doing something right. So I think we can go to the next slide. One of the things I really wanted to mention is the reality that I think technology now is no longer just a department, right? I don't want to say that we obviously don't have a physical department, right, at DIT, and they do an amazing job, but I think technology is pervasive.

[01:03:19] We already saw that with the conversation we just had. It's going to be an element of every single thing that we do and the services that we provide to the county, which is why having, you know, having funds for cybersecurity and for bringing IT to optimal states is so important, right?

[01:03:35] Some of the things that, you know, that we really feel very strongly about and that we want to invest in is things like customer portals to provide seamless support for service desk functions, training, you know, we'll talk a little bit about AI as well.

[01:03:54] And the vision of a one account, one experience, that I think was extremely well articulated by the chairman. And that really is pervasive, not just necessarily for constituents, but also for staff and the things that they can do as well. So, you know, we'll talk a little bit about modernizations and expanding growth areas, strengthening governance in our vendor management, and then developing more agile transformations. The long and short of it is, like, there have been proposals that DIT and

[01:04:28] the IT Policy Advisory Committee have put together for years that require kind of recurring funding, right, projects that we knew, you know, from the get-go, because they've been on this committee for probably five years, that we knew if we didn't have a recurring funding in the budget year after year, it wasn't going to be successful.

[01:04:46] And I think in the last two years, we have been incredibly thankful and welcoming to kind of the support that this board has put together in terms of the IT initiatives. One of the things that we're noticing is the recommendation that we've made the last two years for an additional \$5 million in critical investment areas, such as the things I've mentioned.

[01:05:10] If we want something like a customer portal, the reality is that that can't be a one-off. It can't be something that, you know, we have a budget recommendation one year and we do, you know, a POC and then next year it's all of a sudden, boom, we have it, right? Like we know that there are substantial challenges in terms of the data, in terms of the privacy and the governance to get this thing right that require longer term vision.

[01:05:32] And I think that's one of the things that IPAC is doing a good job of, is making sure that you guys aren't caught off guard by the next big thing, but instead looking at future-proof foundations and not just purchasing digital paperweights. So I think we can go to the next slide.

[01:05:50] One of the things I really want to talk about, and I'll probably pause and maybe provide opportunities for other members to speak, is this customer portal concept. I know that Supervisor Alcorn has mentioned it in the past, and Supervisor Herity has kind of continued this. We're seeing significant progress here, enough to the point where by next month there is a planned POC.

[01:06:13] We're going to work on kind of a small wins, kind of quick wins, quick iterations, and we're looking at how can we implement something like this with a 311 system. Now, I'll quickly mention other counties in this area in Northern Virginia have done similar things. What I'll say is a lot of the technologies they're using for that are maybe kind of lightweight wrappers that don't necessarily address the underlying data challenges under the hood, right?

[01:06:36] For lack of a better word, putting a chatbot on a website does not necessarily give you the true customer 360 experience that we're trying to look for here. So, you know, I think DIT has done a really good job of being very strategic in the way that they're thinking about that. I don't know, Anita, if you wanted to add anything to that.

[01:06:53] No, I think as Sean mentioned, we are looking at launching an MVP or at least initiating it in April to, you know, it's kind of, as Sean said, it's a multi-step process. We first need to address the broader content strategy in trying to ensure on the homepage we bring up our services more as a self-service option to get into customer portal and do personalization.

[01:07:19] that will eventually get into the 311 underlining technology that Sean talked about. And we are making sure we think through this and implement it in a well-thought-out way so we are not putting a wrapper around it. And also, I think we talked about at the last IT committee meeting, we have so many back-end systems that we need to connect to.

[01:07:40] So we want to start in small steps and try to get a couple of them integrated as we move along and have everything come into play. Yeah, thank you for that. Yeah, and I think 311 is a really good example. We have tangible examples, again, from counties in the area. So we think this is a really good use case for us to pilot this customer portal concept.

[01:08:01] I think if we go to the next slide, a couple of priority investment areas before we talk about procurement. You know, a lot of the funding that DIT has goes to public safety, right? These are absolutely essential. You know, like this year we're trying to upgrade the 911 telephony platform.

[01:08:20] The radio system upgrade as well for PSCC, you know, moving focus and plus systems from their current, you know, on-prem into the cloud. These are infrastructure investments that like, you know, it's like keeping the lights on the building, the kind of things that like, if we don't do these things, you know, the system will break and we can't think about the possibilities of these systems breaking, right?

[01:08:46] One of the things I wanted to hit on that I think is absolutely important is the volatility shocks that DIT and probably a lot of folks in the county are seeing for procurement, right? We've talked a lot about it. Look, I'm definitely not a procurement expert. I do know that when you get three-day turnarounds, like quotes, there's a screenshot there that Brian provided, an actual quote, where it expires in three days, 72 hours. That's a problem. It's a problem for staff to be able to make decisions. A lot of this they're seeing in the hardware space, but it's starting to bleed into software as well. And I think a lot of that, you know, the question is, why now? I mean,

[01:09:23] obviously, like tariffs and, you know, and inflation are affecting a lot of these things, these conversations that we're having. But the tangible result of that is, it's affecting the ability of the county to make, you know, cost conscious decisions with respect to, you know, with respect to subscriptions, longer term investments and technologies. One of the things that staff mentioned is that a significant portion of our, you know, our wiring and, and I guess, you know, systems that, you know, are physically connected, right, our networking have to be upgraded in the next couple of years. And this conversation here makes that difficult, right?

[01:10:01] So I think, I think I had a slide, I'm not sure if it's still in there, that talked about strategies that, you know, that ITPAC could implement, you know, could recommend for you, for the folks on how we could address this. But one of the recommendations, honestly, if I were to summarize this slide is there

should be a fast lane established for recurring procurement decisions that we know we're going to have to incur at some point and that we know potentially could be affected by these price volatility shocks, right? To give an analogy, kind of what staff

[01:10:38] is dealing with is like, if you know that there's a blizzard coming and you wait too long to go to the store and you try and grab milk or water, it's gone, right? And if you could find it it's probably way too expensive anyway right so is this going to be the new norm i would hope not i would expect not the reality is that this is what team is dealing with right now and so some strategy should should be put in place to kind of handle this right um i think we could have a whole conversation about where procurement could be improved and modernized how ai could help with that all i'm trying to say is that for right now the team is dealing with significant problems there I don't know more if you wanted to add to that I know that you had strong opinions on that

[01:11:17] yeah we are seeing a lot of um very uh quick turnarounds with a lot of the procurement that we're having um we've been working obviously with our procurement partners here within uh the the county as well um and trying to troubleshoot some of this because again they haven't seen a lot of this either so this is something new that's coming we're hoping maybe it's something that will pass in time, but it is giving us significant heartache, right? A lot of it, I think, is, you know, for like the hardware, the PCs, is based off of a lot of the chip

[01:11:52] shortages that you're seeing in the market ability to predict and really respond to the needs. Like if you look at some of the Gartner reports, they're expecting people are going to be holding on to devices longer. So there are a lot of things that are giving us pause, but we are working with our county partners on this. I'd like to also add, you know, we just did a presentation on affidavits and Supervisor Alcorn said the most cunning thing about misdemeanors, right? I mean, seriously,

[01:12:27] when I look at how we have to procure, we have our own guidelines within the county and then we have guidelines that we have to follow through the state. And I think what we can get to is maybe asking for a certain legislation in the state to change so we can change ours to make it turn around a little faster. But we're going to have to deal with the state issues as well as the county issues to make things move a little bit quicker because of our past history. And it's not Fairfax County's history. It's history throughout the state. So I just want to make sure everybody understands that if we can move procurement faster legally, we would.

[01:13:06] But there is a process that we have to follow. But maybe we can work together to see how we can get the state to change some of their guidelines that will allow us to change some of ours as well. Well, to follow on to that, have we looked at our regulations to see where we can streamline that piece of it?

[01:13:27] At least, obviously, there is the state issue on top of it. But I would hope we've already looked at our – sorry to get you. I mean, Supervisor Herity, I've got to go to an HR meeting real quick, but we look at guidelines every day to see how we can make it faster.

[01:13:43] It's not the fact that we want to make it slower. We just have to make sure that somebody to my left, who is a county attorney, doesn't get upset with how we're moving the process forward. Thank you, Beth. Yeah, I'd like to dovetail off of that comment, and I agree with Mr. Hill.

[01:13:59] We have done everything that we can to review our regulations and to streamline the process. I know specifically with regard to procurement, there have been substantial changes made to the

purchasing resolution over time. This topic was also the subject of an audit back in February of 2018.

[01:14:17] And there was a lot of discussion at that time around ways to speed up procurement basically. And we went back and looked at many, many of our contracts and saw where things were getting held up and engaged in a concerted effort to make sure that, you know, any holes were plugged. But as a general rule, things were moving along. We were finding some delays were occurring with the people with whom we were trying to contract and that things were getting held up in terms of trying to get them to turn around things and get them back to us. I will also say

[01:14:51] that my office has worked with the Virginia IT agency to try to make changes to Virginia law. There was one specific change that was made to 2.2-4311.3, having to do specifically with information technology, goods and services, contracts.

[01:15:12] And we will absolutely continue to do that, to work at the state level to provide as much flexibility at the county level as we can. But as the county executive indicated, there are constraints at the state level on many of these things, including privacy, data sharing, as well as the terms of the contracts that we can agree to.

[01:15:31] So we're still having to negotiate and use the license agreements with large companies that have those agreements all over the country? Well, I would have to say, Mr. Herdy, that we have had great success with that with the largest of entities, including Amazon and Microsoft,

[01:15:56] Because when you ask them about their contract terms, which often include mandatory arbitration, indemnification, limitations of liability that are typically not terms that we as county attorneys can agree to, and it is required by the Virginia Code that we sign off on the form of all contracts that the county enters into, and so we do push back on that.

[01:16:20] And they give us the government terms and conditions, which don't have those things. And so we have had remarkable success, really, in that negotiation effort. And it's the largest to have this down pat.

[01:16:36] They understand that we can't agree to those things, and they come back immediately and give us the other version that they had in their back pocket. So I guess the key then, I would think, would be in your procurement, put that request, put that request up front, and maybe that's where we need, if we're not already doing that, I think we would.

[01:16:57] But when you've got a two- or three-day turnaround, it gets really tough to get things done. So I would note that we have been proactively trying to make clear to prospective vendors that what our terms are, and there's no question about it.

[01:17:19] You know, my office has worked really hard on coming up with standard contracts. This is what our contract needs to look like for us to sign up immediately, and we are delighted to sign up immediately if those terms are there, and we tell them what they are in advance. Just to add, the two- or three-day turnaround is really for those products where there's volatility in the market.

[01:17:41] They're already with vendors that we work with, so we're not going through and negotiating new terms or anything. We're just trying to purchase something that already exists. So your quote for your PC today, you know, is one, tomorrow it's going to be something else just because of that volatility in the global market.

[01:17:59] Yeah. I'll also add something that the staff recognized that I think is an interesting concept. A lot of your big vendors typically have sales account executives and representatives for your school board, but also for the rest of the IT, right?

[01:18:16] And I think one of the things that maybe took companies by surprise was when they were at the same table and were having negotiation conversations, again, because of what just happened, you know, the presentation just happened. So I think that already is changing the nature of how companies approach Fairfax County.

[01:18:35] I know I've talked with folks who have said, oh, okay, yeah, we thought they were separate entities, right? And they, you know, in terms of business, treat you like separate entities, right? So I think there is some synergy there. That definitely affects the procurement conversation as well, which is not trying to open a can of worms there.

[01:18:51] I recognize it's a full conversation that deserves more than 10 minutes. So maybe we'll park that. Can we go to the next slide? Yes. Okay. Look, artificial intelligence is something that I've brought up a couple times. It's a conversation topic on almost every single ITPAC meeting that we have, and I'm sure that it's something that you as supervisors are thinking about.

[01:19:13] I think last year, a lot of in the private industry were about POCs and experimentation. And this year, you're actually seeing the productivity gains. In a lot of ways, like AI is becoming almost like a power tool, like a drill rather than using a hand screwdriver.

[01:19:30] And I think it's important that we have conversations about how we can be intentional in the county. And I, again, give huge props to DIT for having these conversations and piloting these. One of the first things they did was how can we, you know, responsibly use this technology and build governance around it?

[01:19:46] And I think now the answer is, okay, what are the areas, the pilot areas that we can really start to look at business process transformations and improvements where AI really can, you know, can kind of get in there and, you know, result in 20 to 30 percent improvement gains in efficiency? That is part of, you know, the tranche of funding, right?

[01:20:06] Those are conversations that we intend to have. And one of the things that ITPAC has long advocated for was having a, you know, a dedicated role for, you know, chief data officer or something of that type or setting up a committee, something similar to that.

[01:20:21] I think, you know, in the, again, five plus years that I've been on this, it's come up every single year. And it's been always like, do we have the funding? Do we have the ability to support that, right? Because that is very much so a very critical and necessary role and a team that I think now we're looking at standing up and actually, you know, having intentionality on those AI conversations.

[01:20:43] The next slide. And then, you know, I think we're almost to the end and we can start conversations, questions. This one is one of the biggest challenges. It's highlighted in the letter. It's the very first thing. And honestly, it's in every single letter every year is like hiring impediment.

[01:20:58] 20% of DIT staff is in drop right now. This is probably the same conversation you're hearing generally on different departments. When I see the same issue and same challenge in the letters year after

year, I think, like, how can we solve this problem, right? Part of it comes with, like, you know, competitive compensation packages, right?

[01:21:18] Obviously, like, the DMV area has very competitive IT professionals and keeping that up there. Another one is just hiring responsiveness. Like, what are some of the ways that we can, you know, bring in new talent, bring in, you know, folks either through interesting job opportunities or through the role profiles that we're representing and providing?

[01:21:40] This is, I think, a longer term conversation, right? But it's something to be aware of that folks who are eligible for retirement who have earned it will be aging out and retiring soon and will be in a position where we have to replace those roles, right? We already are, frankly, and so it's becoming more and more of a challenge.

[01:21:59] I think the last slide is a summary. We can skip this. We can go to the last slide. The last slide is a summary here. Again, just to highlight, we fully support the baseline funding. I think it's required. A lot of this is not just us using what's the new thing on the block. A lot of this is, hey, we have tangible investments that have to be made in modernizing and in the infrastructure that we already have.

[01:22:21] Some of it is there are things we'd like to do that are improvements that are innovative that we'd like to invest in. The second one, which was the bringing IT to an optimal state, I kind of hit some of those. The letter does a really good job of getting into more detail than I probably could. And then the last one is strengthening cybersecurity.

[01:22:39] I could get into details of that, but the reality is that, like, the county does a really good job of this already, and we want to make sure we continue doing this. You know, we win awards almost on a regular basis when it comes to the fantastic work that DIT does. So we want to make sure we can continue that.

[01:22:55] With that, I think I'll end, and then we can, you know, start questions. Okay, and if anybody has questions either on the presentation or on the actual letter, I already made the comment we really need to look at the base IT funding as we move forward because we've been funding a lot of IT improvements without the increase in the base.

[01:23:23] And if we're going to move forward doing a lot of this stuff, we're going to have to look at the base, which should drive efficiencies elsewhere in the organization, not elimination of positions, but efficiencies. So with that, I'm going to turn it to everybody else. Thank you.

[01:23:39] So first, I don't disagree with that, and I am glad, though, to see the supplemental funding that we just got presented this morning in third quarter because I think it's essential to the work that we're doing on IT. I have kind of a tough question, and you may not want to answer this, but I'm going to ask it anyway.

[01:23:59] Since you drew attention to the internal talent challenge, I mean, this is something, you know, we're facing in a lot of our agencies. But IT is always that one where you think about, do we have the right percentage of in-house talent versus the right percentage of contract talent working on these systems for the county?

[01:24:18] and there's a core knowledge that you must have in-house without a doubt. Do you feel like you've looked at that to know whether we're at the right balance point or whether one of the answers to the

long-term talent challenges that we have in such a massively evolving, quickly changing area that we should be focused more longer term on outsourcing or getting some outsourced support through contracts to conduct some of our IT operations?

[01:24:47] Yeah, I can give you my personal opinion on that, and then I can let staff, because I think they probably have more details on that. I think part of the challenge is with the technologies that we have that we're supporting in legacy. A lot of those are not technologies you see on an open market. The average person that you're hiring is not going to have access and use with a lot of these legacy systems.

[01:25:08] And so I think, sure, you can certainly look to expanding with staff augmentation models. But the reality is, like, your average system that I think that we're supporting right now is not going to be something that you would regularly find, you know, on the open market or, you know, with the staff augmentation model, right?

[01:25:25] I think a lot of those companies, they're looking at staffing engineers who have, you know, support in cloud systems, right? Support on, you know, various hyperscalers, right? So I think that's part of the challenge is, like, there's a skills gap there that's not necessarily being addressed and is going to become a bigger and bigger challenge as people retire.

[01:25:42] Maura, I don't know if you wanted to add to that. Yes, I just wanted to add when our new director came in, that is actually one of the areas of focus that we've really spent a lot of time on, is looking at the tools and the skill sets that our team have and really then taking that into making sure that we have training plans to bring people up to speed.

[01:26:01] Because to Sean's point, there are legacy applications and legacy skill sets that are here, and we're trying to find ways to encourage our staff to take that training, to find those other areas. You know, we're throwing in automation in other areas, so where can these skills now be, or these people be transferred into with different skills?

[01:26:21] And I think that's going to be ever-evolving, right? Like, one day you're going to have to be really good at, you know, one day you're working on coding, the next day you're doing vibe coding. Like, so all of these things are evolving, and we're going to have to be really good at making sure that our teams have training plans, that we're working with the latest technology as well as kind of finding and retiring some of those legacy systems.

[01:26:45] Yeah, I appreciate that because it's a sensitive topic, but frankly, you know, I have total confidence in the team that we have, and, you know, we've won all these awards, as was mentioned. I mean, we have, you know, I put our IT department up against anyone. It's gotten us to this point, but we need to be thinking about, you know, where are we going in the future and what does that look like?

[01:27:08] And I just, with the speed at which things are changing, you know, it has to be, at some point you have to have that conversation about training versus outside support and what that balance looks like moving forward. And I think it, you know, with the pressures we have with retirements and other things coming forward, we have to be mindful of that when we think about, you know, where long-term we're going.

[01:27:32] But, you know, the team we have is outstanding, and the concern factor for us with the retirements is losing that amount of talent, and then how do you regain that talent? Is it through training up? Is it through training up plus, you know, outside augmentation, all of those things that come to mind?

[01:27:50] So I appreciate that. Okay, start down here. No questions on this. All right, we're going to finish on time after all I thought we might be running a few minutes over First of all, I want to thank all the members of it pack for all the work that they do It is important and staff clearly listens and appreciates the support these from all the conversations I've had with them a couple of topics that I see that we might Certainly have coming up

[01:28:27] Certainly the customer portal will be on the next agenda I might, and please share with me if you've got other thoughts, but maybe something, certainly where we are with the AI training is something that's always interesting, and we may bring procurement back as well.

[01:28:46] With that, we are adjourned right on time. Thank you all.



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