



***School District of Cudahy***  
***Cudahy, Wisconsin***

**Regular Board Meeting:** October 14, 2024

**Agenda Item:** Heartland Business Systems IT Synergy Audit and Technology Update

**Report Preparation:** Brian Dasher

**Background Information:** To recap from the last Board meeting on September 23, Heartland Business Systems conducted an on-site review of our technology infrastructure, processes, and procedures. They had identified the following priorities that we need to address within the next year:

- Windows 10 will only be supported until October 2025. To continue receiving operating system updates, all our PCs must run Windows 11. All of our desktops throughout the district are too old to run Windows 11. Continued use of these machines will leave the district vulnerable to cyber attacks.
- Our voice-over IP (VOIP) phone system is nearing end-of-life and needs to be upgraded. Again, this creates a cyber risk as our phone system is internet-based, and each phone represents a potential point of access to our network.
- We have several servers nearing their end of life and will need replacement.
- The core switch at General Mitchell does not have any redundancy. This switch is the central point at which the physical cables for the entire district's internet service connect. If this switch were to go down and need replacement, the whole district would be offline for the time it takes to order and install a new switch.

Over the last few weeks, our tech team has been investigating these items and has begun obtaining quotes from vendors for equipment to address the first three bullet points.

- The team has put together a project plan for the desktop replacements. We currently have 216 desktops throughout the district. We will evaluate how these desktops are being used and whether it really is necessary to replace all of them. In some cases, it may be possible to simply retire the machines without a replacement. We are also exploring purchasing refurbished machines instead of entirely new ones. This could dramatically lower the total cost of this project. This project will be over the threshold dollar amount for just quotes. This will require an RFP per our policy.
- Phone System: Digicorp has proposed replacing the phone servers instead of buying all new phones. If we pursue this, it would be possible to keep the current phones functioning until 2030. This would have a cost of about \$16,000 to \$20,000. We will have to move pretty quickly with this project. NEC will no longer sell the equipment

after December 2024, and Digicorp suggests we get this order in right away due to a potential rush of orders to beat the deadline. We are working on getting at least one more additional quote from a second vendor to comply with the board's purchasing policy.

- Tom is currently exploring solutions for our servers. Servers can be expensive, costing upwards of \$20,000 to \$30,000, but Tom is exploring a solution that would only require the purchase of one server.

At this point, we are working on developing ballpark budget figures for these projects. Once we have determined our specific needs, we will either bid these projects out through a competitive process or issue RFPs to interested vendors to get solid pricing.

I have also consulted with our bond attorney, and it will be possible to address technology infrastructure and other equipment needs through the capital referendum if it passes. However, that would necessitate moving other critical capital needs out of the proposed list of projects already presented.

At the last meeting, we also discussed Heartland's proposal for an IT Synergy Audit. Their proposal is attached, and I discuss the rationale for my recommendation below.

**Strategic Priority:** Safe & Efficient School & District Operations

**Policy Impact:**

**Administrative Recommendation:** Last month, I wrote the following:

*I strongly recommend proceeding with the IT Synergy audit from Heartland Business Systems. I was very impressed with their on-site team and the insights they provided. They offer services and staffing support that our current vendors do not, and they can provide crucial support and service to us over the next year to help us get in a good place to address the issues we are facing.*

*We will need help to address these issues before the deadlines we are facing with the VOIP system and the deprecation of Windows 10. The IT Synergy audit will be the first step in providing that help, but we may need additional help throughout the following year. Heartland did say that our tech team is staffed pretty light for a district our size. However, they also felt that if we established better processes and procedures, automated systems where they can be automated, and addressed these initial issues, we could operate with the current staffing level in the department. But getting there will require temporary help, and Heartland can provide that.*

I understand there have been questions about why we are not using Digicorp to perform these services. Digicorp has been providing services to the district for over 20 years and has provided excellent service, and we have no concerns about continuing to do business with them. However, we should, from time to time, get perspectives from other vendors in situations where a vendor has been with a district for a long time. It is part of the due diligence required of a school district to ensure that our vendors do not come to expect our business and that we continue to receive the best possible prices for our goods and services.

We would benefit from different perspectives regarding our technology infrastructure, but that doesn't mean I recommend discontinuing our relationship with DigiCorp.

Moving forward with the Heartland audit does not obligate us to purchase equipment or services from them. All required equipment and services will follow the board's purchasing requirements. DigiCorp, like any other vendor, will have the opportunity to provide quotes, consultations, and bid proposals for all future projects.

**Board Action Requested:** The following motion is requested: "Motion to approve the proposal from Heartland Business Systems for the IT Synergy Audit."

**Fiscal Note:** The IT Synergy Audit will cost \$10,000.