



Okemos Public Schools

Media & Technology Department

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Date: 04/14/25

To: Board of Education

From: Thomas Isom

Re: Approval Request – Data Center, Firewall, and Phone System Upgrades

As part of our ongoing commitment to enhancing district-wide infrastructure through the 2022 bond program, we are recommending approval for a strategic modernization of our core IT systems. This initiative includes critical upgrades to our **data center**, **firewall infrastructure**, and **district-wide phone system**. These investments are vital to supporting current and future instructional technology, bolstering cybersecurity, and ensuring reliable, scalable communication systems across all buildings.

Over the past several months, our team conducted a comprehensive evaluation of available solutions. This process included technical reviews, stakeholder consultations, cost-benefit analyses, and formal RFP and bid processes where applicable. The final recommendations represent solutions that deliver the best value, highest reliability, and long-term sustainability for the district.

Project Components and Recommendations

1. Data Center Upgrade (*District Servers and Storage*)

Recommended Vendor: Sentinel Technologies (Hewlett-Packard Enterprise)

Cost: \$220,472 - 2022 bond program

After evaluating proposals from HPE, Dell, and Lenovo, we recommend Sentinel Technologies, leveraging HPE infrastructure and the MHEC pre-bid contract. Sentinel's solution demonstrated superior reliability, performance, and long-term cost efficiency. Their proposal includes a fully managed deployment with high-quality support, making it the most strategic and future-proof choice for the district.

2. Firewall Upgrade

Recommended Vendor: Sentinel Technologies, Inc.

Cost: \$228,057 - 2022 bond program with partial e-rate reimbursement

We issued a formal RFP and received proposals from Sentinel Technologies and Coquina Labs, both quoting Palo Alto hardware per specification. Sentinel's proposal was less than Coquina's and includes a fully managed solution, high-availability configuration, staff training, and complete E-Rate compliance. Their experience in the K-12 space and commitment to minimizing risk make them the clear choice.

3. Phone System Upgrade

Recommended Vendor: RingCentral

Cost: \$299,628.05- 2022 bond program

Using the SourceWell Cooperative program, we evaluated proposals from RingCentral, 8x8, and Mitel. RingCentral's cloud-based system emerged as the top recommendation due to its robust feature set, ease of implementation, and seamless integration with existing platforms like Google Workspace and Microsoft 365. RingCentral's cloud-native design reduces our hardware footprint, lowers maintenance costs, and enhances overall system resilience and future proofing us.

These projects will include installation, removal of legacy equipment, configuration, training, and ongoing support as applicable. All vendors were selected based on a rigorous process prioritizing value, performance, reliability, and long-term support.

We are confident that these upgrades will significantly strengthen the district's technology infrastructure, enhance instructional delivery, and ensure secure, stable, and future-ready systems. Approval of this proposal is a critical step forward in supporting the district's mission to provide a safe, innovative, and effective learning environment for all students and staff.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Thomas Isom". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the beginning and a trailing flourish.

Thomas Isom

Director of Media and Technology
Okemos Public Schools