Item 25-0406: ERP Conversion Update
Human Resources and Information Technology Committee
Wed, Apr 23, 2025 6:30PM

Alderperson Sheri Hartzheim (District 13) 19:55
We'll move on then to our information items. The first one is 25-0406, the ERP conversion update. I assume director Popp is going to speak on that.

Director Corey Popp (IT) 20:07
Yup, I will. So, this memo was in response to past Chair Jones a few weeks ago got an inquiry from a resident just on the status of the ERP module and conversion. It had been a while since we reported out on it. So, I think the timing is really good here, especially because we have a new committee starting and bring everyone up to speed on where we are on the ERP conversion as well as what it is and what's happening.

Director Corey Popp (IT) 20:36
So, this memo focuses on four modules of the ERP system, the content management system, the enterprise asset management system, utility billing, and permitting and licensing. So, I'm very happy to report that the TCM, the Content Management module, is live. It went live on February 28. The conversion to that—the conversion costs—were approved by this committee few months ago, several months ago, in '24 I believe, to get that done. And it was completed. The cost of the former system, $25,000 annual, will not—we won't absorb that this year. That's off the books. We will not be paying that.

Director Corey Popp (IT) 21:17
A few weeks later, the EAM module, which is also part of Tyler Munis asset management, that went live the week of March 10. So, the asset management system has completed as well.

Director Corey Popp (IT) 21:28
So not quite as good a news on utility billing. That has moved into its second year. It'll be a two-year conversion as of June. I think there was a kickoff meeting in May of '23 and official work started to take place in June. Nothing has really gone wrong with the utility billing conversion. It's not like we've had some delay due to errors or systems blowing up or anything. It's been more complicated than was initially thought it would be. There's just a lot involved in utility billing.

Director Corey Popp (IT) 22:03
It's also a very cautious conversion. When we do a conversion like asset management or content management, that's really, for the most part, an internal tool to the city. So, if there's problems with the conversion or errors in the conversion, if the system's down for a few hours the morning of the conversion, it's not very visible to the public. It's not visible to the residents or your constituents. Utility billing is extremely visible. So, if we send out tens of thousands of incorrect utility bills, it's a very big deal for the city. It causes a great deal of confusion, as you can imagine. See a lot of heads nodding. I don't need to go into it. So, I think there's just been a lot of caution in regards to that.

Director Corey Popp (IT) 22:41
There's also a lot of pieces to the conversion. It's been explained to me several times by the Lead Systems Analyst. Couple different issues. One is we're on a completely customized system. The IBM-i series (you've heard me talk about it in this committee or even in Council before), it just puts us in a place where there's no

precedent for the conversion. So, if you have other cities and other municipalities converting to Tyler Munis from other shrink wrap, off the shelf, ERP systems, there's a path, there's precedent, there's things that the Tyler Munis can go back to and help with the current conversion. This one is completely home grown. All of the solutions for the conversion have to come from our team.

Director Corey Popp (IT) 23:21
Staffing is another issue. We're down to our last I-series employee at the city. When I arrived here, we had three. Two have retired since then. We're down to the last person. So, there's not a lot of FTEs in the IT department to even complete this conversion. Thankfully, the person we have is the person who wrote the vast majority of utility billing in the modules that we remain on. So, we're fortunate in that regards.

Director Corey Popp (IT) 23:44
And then there's just all the pieces of utility billing. The first thing that we have to do, and I believe we're at this point now, is we have to establish the correct services on the correct accounts. So, what utilities does every account have? That's every home and commercial business in the city. So, do you have trash pickup? Do you have water? Do you have sewer? If you're a business, do you have exception meters? Does some water that you take into the business go out through the sewer, and does other product leave through evaporation or go into a product that have to go through exception meters? There's all these kinds of things that go into it. You can't even do a balance forward until all those services are attached to correct accounts on Tyler Munis. So that has been the number one thing we've worked on, I think, over the past year, is to get the correct services on the correct accounts.

Director Corey Popp (IT) 24:35
We can check that by running the balances. We have been, in the past, millions of dollars off on those balances. As of the last one—and I don't jinx it, and IT people can be as superstitious as athletes, ironically, sometimes, but we were one to $200 off, not $100,000 but three figures, one to $200 off. That's an error that can be corrected post conversion without a huge impact to the resident. If that's only one or two accounts that can be—I want to use the word "easily", but that can be corrected post conversion. A million dollars, can't do that.

Director Corey Popp (IT) 25:14
I do have good news. The next stage would be parallel bill running. So, we are running our first parallel bill as of May 1. Now we have run billing in the Tyler Munis system, really we'll say for testing purposes, for curiosity purposes, for familiarity purposes, to just understand what does a bill run look like. But we never matched that to a parallel run on the i-series. As of May 1, we're going to run utility billing for a particular district. On that day, we'll take the results out of the i-series, the results out of the Tyler system, and we'll compare them. So, then we'll begin to match the parallel utility billing to make sure the billings come out correctly.

Director Corey Popp (IT) 25:53
Right now, we're scheduled for July 29 is the conversion date. That's probably—just full disclosure—the fifth or sixth conversion date we've scheduled. So, to say I'm optimistic, I don't even like to say that anymore. I am. I'm very optimistic, more so than before, but I've said that every single time, like, I feel good about it, this time I feel good about this time, just to have another delay. But it does look good at this point.

Director Corey Popp (IT) 26:21
We've had conversations through the utilities department, the finance department, the IT department, all involved parties. And I do have a note in the memo here that Mayor Woodford has said at this point, unless it's resident-affecting, unless there's a major problem with the billings and what the residents going to receive in the mail, we have to go live at this point. So internal strife, internal issues, is something that we're just gonna

have to say, okay, if we have to do some manual processes to clean this up after the conversion, we're gonna do that as long as it's non-resident affecting. So that's where that stands right now.

Director Corey Popp (IT) 26:58
I'm gonna continue to go on 'til you cut me off here. But the other thing with utility billing is originally, when I arrived here, after property taxes finished, EAM was supposed to be next, and I sat down with the mayor, and we had a discussion, and I said that I felt that it would be better to go toward utility billing because it was revenue. I wanted to get the revenue off of the i-series and into the Tyler system. I wanted that to be the priority, so that if the i-series did go down, at least we were able to collect revenue. So, the—that's exactly what we did. We went into the utility billing conversion. A year into it, we were ready to begin EAM, or EAM was due to start. We were confident enough that utility billing would finish within the next three months that we went ahead and began to run EAM parallel. That went on for a year.

Director Corey Popp (IT) 27:49
So, for the past year, city staff has been doing two ERP conversions, one for utility billing and one for EAM. That's caused a considerable enough amount of stress and distraction, the mayor and I sat down and we agreed no more. We would—now that EAM is behind us and finished on time, we would finish utility billing before beginning the final module Permitting and Licensing. So, we have on the calendar. The contract is signed for permitting and licensing. We have a tentative date with the supplier to begin September 1. It sounds far out there, but July 29—that's the very end of July. That only gives us about 30 days to close utility billing. So, I really feel like September 1 will probably move because we'll—there will be 30 days of cleanup on the utility billing conversion. So, we're going to hold that date until we can at least get a more solid date, whether that be October or November. But I'm confident, should utility billing finish or convert in end of July we'll be able to start permitting and licensing. That one's estimated to be about a year. So, we're looking to be fully off the i-series now, November, December, next year, 2026.

Director Corey Popp (IT) 29:04
So, I'll open it up to questions. I know that was a lot, but I wanted to introduce this whole topic to the to the new committee here, as well as just sort of close up some of the things that had been outstanding from previous committee.

Alderperson Sheri Hartzheim (District 13) 29:18
Any committee members with questions? Alder Hayden.

Alderperson Patrick Hayden (District 7) 29:21
A couple questions. What kind of savings are we looking for to achieve with moving to the ERP? Or are there any savings? Are we just looking at efficiencies, getting—decommissioning a system that is no longer viable?

Director Corey Popp (IT) 29:33
Right. So, you're not going to see a hard dollar savings. So, if you look at the i-series right now, the—our support on is under $10,000 a year. Now that's not because it's such a great system that has all this cheap support. That's because we can't get support. We're down to our last supplier in the country, and they actually had called us a couple years ago and said, "We can't help you anymore. We can't get parts for this." So, we said, "What if we got the parts?" So, we literally went out to eBay and the auction sites, and we bought two used i-series and had them sent to the city on pallets. So, we store all of our own parts for this system, and the supplier has agreed to use those parts to fix the system as needed, and that's what we do.

Director Corey Popp (IT) 30:20
So, it's really a matter of—it's not a matter of cost savings. We're well beyond that. We're into a whole new mode of, we have to keep the city running. We have to produce a utility bill. We have to produce—or we have to be able to receive property taxes. This is business continuity. This really isn't efficiency.

Director Corey Popp (IT) 30:38
That said Director Homan was just here, and I believe she referenced EAM into the efficiencies she's experiencing now that she's live on EAM. It frees up FTEs, because the system starts to guide workflows, and I think we'll start to see efficiencies just with staff.

Alderperson Sheri Hartzheim (District 13) 30:57
Alder Hayden.

Alderperson Patrick Hayden (District 7) 30:58
Thank you. One other question about your parallel run. When you're reviewing your parallel run, do you have an automated process to review bill by bill by bill, or are you just picking like the 30th, the 50th and doing a manual review?

Director Corey Popp (IT) 31:12
So, I can answer those questions one in two ways, and neither of those are tonight. I can—I can bring—

Alderperson Sheri Hartzheim (District 13) 31:18
There's not enough time left in the world.

Alderperson Patrick Hayden (District 7) 31:19
I don't want to ruin their Wednesday nights. I'd be happy with an email.

Director Corey Popp (IT) 31:19
I can bring our systems analyst in to ask—to answer that question at the next meeting directly. You can get a direct answer from our Lead Systems Analyst. Or I can ask her to write an email to the committee to explain what that process looks like. But I can't—I just can't speak to that. I don't know what that's going to look like.

Director Corey Popp (IT) 31:38
Okay, all right, I'll make a note of that for her to follow up with you.

Alderperson Sheri Hartzheim (District 13) 31:41
Excellent. Anyone else with any questions concerns? All right, thank you, Director Popp.