**Minutes**

**Court Technology Committee**

**Friday June 28th, 2024**

**9:00 am**

Members Participating:

Hon. Jerod Tufte, Supreme Court Justice

Hon. Lonnie Olson, Judge - Northeast Judicial District

Petra Hulm, Chief Deputy Clerk of Supreme Court

Kristen Erickson, Recorder – Cass County

Lee Ann Barnhardt, Director of Education & Communication

Susan Hoffer, Clerk of District Court – Ward County

Carolyn Probst, District Court Administrator – Unit 4

Hon. Stacy Louser, Judge – North Central Judicial

Members Absent:

Hon. Rhonda Ehlis, Judge – Southwest Judicial District

Hon. Robin Schmidt, Judge – Northwest Judicial District

Michele Bring, Clerk of District Court – Burleigh County

Staff:

John Tassava, Director of Technology

Sally Holewa, State Court Administrator

Don Wolf, Director of Finance

The meeting was called to order by Chair Justice Jerod Tufte.

**Approval of Minutes from January 20, 2023 Meeting**

**Judge Stacey Louser moved to approve the January 20, 2023 meeting minutes. Kristen Erickson seconded the motion and the motion carried.**

**General System Updates**

**C-Track Project**

The Supreme Court case management system, C-Track, went live on April 1st, 2024 and has been going well for the few months it has been live. They are waiting on a few fixes as well as some enhancements for search capabilities.

**Phone System Upgrade by end of Biennium**

Avaya and the ACD system from NDIT is going away. IT started as a pilot project and now 4 counties have went live with the new Zoom phone system. The project is scheduled to be completed by the end of the year. Discussion at the Unit Admin meeting did not bring forth any major concerns or issues.

**Juvenile System Update**

The new juvenile case management system went live May 1st, 2023. A few changes are continuing to be made within the workgroup. There are 4 enhancements they are looking at for the near future.

**Juvenile User Group Charter Approval**

The proposed Juvenile User Group Charter was disbursed. During the project a steering committee was formed. They now need a mechanism to allow for periodic reviews and recommendations for enhancements and operational changes. This group will operate similar to the Odyssey User Group. Judge Louser questioned why there was not representation from either judges or referees. John Tassava stated there was minimal participation from judges/referees within the steering committee and the Juvenile Directors did not include a judge/referee in the user group. John stated that the judges/referees do not log in to the juvenile system but rather they view what is needed from within Odyssey.

Susan Hoffer moved to approve the Juvenile User Group Charter. Kristen Erickson seconded the motion and the motion carried.

**Strategic Workgroup Update**

Lee Ann Barnhardt led the strategic workgroup through a series of exercises. Lee Ann compiled the results. Some of the exercises included what IT is doing well, what could be improved and future focuses. Discussion included staffing, job duties, AI Technology among other things. It was then put into goals such as increasing customer satisfaction, transitioning the technology committee and using a more focused structure on projects and workflow. It was discussed how this could be accomplished with existing staff as well as future FTE’s. Lee Ann felt it was a good robust discussion.

John Tassava highlighted 3 areas of discussion. Continuing support for users, maintaining current systems and obtaining additional staff for future projects and new technologies.

**2025-2027 IT Budget Overview and Recommendations**

John Tassava reported on some of the planned and proposed projects such as AI software, courtroom sound equipment replacement, digital evidence storage system, problem solving CMS system, simultaneous interpreter project, new/remodels of courtrooms, assisted hearing device replacements, and courtroom microphones and wiring. John does not yet have quotes for the digital evidence or problem solving systems.

Increases within the budget include general software support agreements. Software costs in general have gone up as well as NDIT network costs. The Juvenile Supervision and Supreme Court C-Track systems maintenance costs are now included in the budget. Server, storage and equipment costs have also increased.

Sally Holewa addressed the group regarding several budget items. The digital evidence storage system was originally suggested by a judge to look into. Sally explained that several demonstrations were looked at and then an RFI was sent out. We have received 13 and once they are reviewed and we get a sense of the cost it will then be decided if they will move forward. A group will be formed to include Indigent Defense, judges and several prosecutors to determine how or if we proceed with this solution. Similarly, the problem solving case management system was a request from Scott Johnson to see if we could find a solution for specialty courts such as Domestic Violence, Mental Health and Drug Courts that are currently tracked through paper or spreadsheets. Additionally, Sally stated that we have received information regarding AI solutions from Tyler Technologies to automatically docket certain filings through File & Serve. This may help with the issues of recruitment and retaining employees.

Susan Hoffer asked if we should be considering adding FTE’s to build our own specialty case management system if the costs for purchasing one comes in high. She stated the IT department has already built several systems that have proven to be very valuable. She also expressed concern of buying an off the shelf system that we are continuously having to modify to fit our needs. Justice Tufte stated he would be passing on any discussion/concerns to the Supreme Court when they discuss the budget.

**Judge Lonnie Olson moved to recommend the technology budget proposal as presented to the Supreme Court. Carolyn Probst seconded the motion and the motion carried.**

Justice Tufte requested John send out the proposed costs once received for the items in the budget that have placeholders.

**Continuation of the Technology Committee**

Justice Tufte, Judge Robin Schmidt and John Tassava had a discussion on the current status and the future mission and purpose of the technology committee. Justice Tufte stated that in brood strokes the Court has a bit of a preference to reduce the number of standing committees and move more towards task specific groups. The discussion was that most of the work with this committee has been receiving updates and reviewing budgets otherwise this committee hasn’t had the work of things like kicking off the Odyssey project. Justice Tufte asked the committee for their thoughts on reorienting our technology efforts to task specific groups. Petra Hulm stated the committee has only been meeting once a year and doesn’t know how effective the committee can be meeting that infrequently. She believes some oversight is good. Petra stated that IT has such a large impact on our daily work that maintaining some form of a committee may be needed. Lee Ann stated that some takeaways from the strategic report that would be beneficial is to have individuals from this committee being the champions, the early adopters, and take the field trips and the training to have more individuals that can bring things back to the committee versus just meeting and receiving updates. Justice Tufte added that there is potential to combine certain committees with added workgroups for some of the tasks. He questioned if there is a revitalized mission for a standing committee or is there a different structure to be considered. Judge Lonnie Olson stated that unless you are working with technology day to day, it can be difficult for him as a judge to understand a lot of the nuances of the projects coming in. He understands the concept of working groups for a larger committee and thinks a working group concept would probably be a more efficient one. Susan Hoffer stated there is a lot of major change on the horizon and ensuring whatever model moves forward, getting the expertise and knowledge of the end users is a significant piece in thinking holistically as we try to move forward.

Justice Tufte thanked both Susan Hoffer and Petra Hulm whom have served 3 terms and that their positions will need to be filled.

**For the Good of the Order**

John Tassava would like to propose that the courts follow the NDIT password rules, which are more complex, to be uniform around the state. John explained the differences to the group. He has heard positive feedback across the state.

**Petra Hulm moved to approve investigating and implementing NDIT’s password rules. Judge Lonnie Olson seconded the motion and the motion carried.**

Judge Lonnie Olson expressed concerns with court reporters having to move their laptops from courtroom to offices as many issues arise from this and much time is wasted. He feels it would be money well spent to have a PC in the courtroom. John Tassava stated that other areas are not experiencing the issues. He suggested looking into this issue in particular and there are advantages to the recorders moving their own laptop as they are familiar with it. He also stated that previously the updates weren’t happening on the courtroom PC’s and having the docking stations rather than a PC reduces the licensing costs. Judge Stacey Louser also agreed with Judge Lonnie Olson’s concerns. She stated that there is also a safety component with the court recorders having to remain in the courtroom for a longer period of time. Kristen Erickson stated so far she has not had many issues with moving her laptop from courtroom to courtroom. She likes the portability and ability to work from a remote location as well as knowing where everything is at on her laptop. Susan Hoffer commented that having at least one courtroom with a PC would be valuable.