Town of Freetown

Information Technology Strategic Planning

Prepared By: The Office of Municipal & School Technology

EOTSS | Executive Office of Technology Services & Security

Freetown Town Offices, Assonet[1]

Executive Summary

In the summer of 2017, the Town of Freetown signed a Community Compact Cabinet agreement with the Baker-Polio administration. The Town selected Information Technology Strategic Planning best practice to develop more efficient Town operations, particularly with IT investments.

The Town of Freetown is located in Bristol County, Massachusetts, divided into two smaller villages, Assonet and East Freetown. Incorporated in 1683[2], the Town's economy was based on

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[1] ToddC4176. Freetown Town Offices. Wikipedia. CC BY-SA 3.0. Accessed August 1, 2019. https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=2246838

[2] A History of the town of Freetown, Massachusetts: with an account of the Old Home Festival, July 30th, 1902. UMass Amherst Libraries. https://archive.org/details/historyoftownoff00free/page/n5

agriculture, shipbuilding, and ironworks powered by neighboring rivers and bodies of water.[3] Today, the Town is known for its outdoor activities involving the lakes, rivers, and nature reserves. Its population is 9,175, and the median household income is $85,040.[4]

Background

Information Technology has been playing an important role in many Towns and Cities across the Commonwealth, facilitating communication between Town or City employees, constituents, and other stakeholders. The Town requested an appropriate strategic planning in order to achieve operational efficiencies via information technology investments.

By prioritizing IT investments, the Town will be able to plan out short-term and long-term objectives on how to improve IT capabilities, achieving maximum value for stakeholders.[5] The purpose of this strategic planning is to guide business strategy involving the Town's overall Information Technology posture, establishing sustainable protocols along with proposed upgrades and improvements.

IT Initiatives

Understanding the necessity of IT investments, the Town initiated various projects in order to streamline data processes and maximize their IT efficiency, which led to a number of major investments in hardware, software, and processes.

IT Asset Inventory

The Town first started with the asset inventory, listing a full IT hardware and software inventory containing all pertinent information such as purchase dates, specifications, product lifecycle, etc.

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[3] About Our Town. Town of Freetown, MA. Accessed August 1, 2019. https://www.freetownma.gov/about-our-town-0
[4] Freetown town, Bristol County, Massachusetts. U.S. Census Bureau. Accessed August 1, 2019. https://data.census.gov/cedsci/profile?q=Freetown%20town,%20Bristol%20County,%20Massachusetts&g=0600000US2500525240
[5] Schulte, Ansgar. IT Strategic Planning Key Initiative Overview. Gartner. Published 13 February 2015. https://www.gartner.com/document/2695520?ref=solrAll&refval=227671573&qid=1caa8d4528577fbbf4fd9e

Having an asset inventory will help the Town in ongoing budgeting efforts and will support future planning for maintenance, upgrades and replacement of assets, leading to a more reliable and secure technology environment.

Migration to Cloud-based Systems

For better security and stability, the Town migrated some of its software to cloud-based systems, which includes the Town's accounting software, payroll software, office software and dog licensing software. In doing so, the Town is now in a better position for business continuity and IT resiliency.

Implementation of Public-facing Systems

For better outreach and citizen engagement, the Town appropriated funds for a number of new systems in place. OneCall, a technology-based citizen notification system was implemented to promote better communication between residents and governmental officials. The software allows the Town to distribute phone calls, texts, and emails to town residents who have signed up for the service. So far, this software system has proven to be useful in giving different notices to constituents, such as the opening of heating or cooling shelters, weather alerts, road closings, upcoming town meetings, community events, and other matters of community interest. Additionally, the Town purchased a new VOIP telephone system, which aimed to streamline and improve phone communications across the Town.

Furthermore, the Town's municipal website received a significant facelift through the efforts of the Town's Webmaster, Timm McIntosh and a vendor, CivicPlus. Along with expanding departmental and committee content, the newly implemented website contains new features such as bid postings, online forms, services by town department, contact information, and informational postings of community events. The Town also maintains a social media presence through Facebook and Twitter for outreach purposes.

Conclusion

The Town of Freetown leveraged the Community Compact project to make a positive impact on the Town's IT infrastructure and operations, actively embracing technology and utilizing it to provide improved services to constituents. Along with the changes made through this project, the Town is looking to implement new electronic permitting and inspectional services software to streamline building operations and efficient inspection process.

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