

THE CORPORATION OF THE MUNICIPALITY OF MISSISSIPPI MILLS

STAFF REPORT

DATE: January 26, 2021
TO: Committee of the Whole
FROM: Jennifer Russell, Deputy Clerk
SUBJECT: Live Streaming Service Upgrade

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT Committee of the Whole request Council approve the annual cost of \$6,000 plus an annual fee increase for livestreaming upgrades;

AND THAT the upgrade be funded in 2021 from modernization funding and in future years to be included in the annual budget.

BACKGROUND:

Livestreaming Council meetings was identified as a municipal priority to increase openness and transparency and to increase accessibility for those wishing to watch Council meetings.

On February 5th, 2019 Council awarded the Request for Proposal for Livestreaming and Meeting Management Services to eSCRIBE for a three (3) year contract. Currently the Municipality is using Webcasting Lite, which is the entry level option of livestreaming services for smaller municipalities.

DISCUSSION:

The Municipality has been using the livestreaming technology since September with great results. It allows Council the ability to meet throughout COVID 19 restrictions while still allowing the meetings to be open to the Public through the use of our website's Council Calendar function. The Calendar provides links to the agenda and minutes as well as livestreaming and recorded videos with time stamps. There have however been obstacles with the new system. We do have the option to upgrade the service to increase the functionality. Below are some of the issues with our current system and the options available through an upgrade to eSCRIBE's Webcasting Plus.

Recording Issues

There have been issues regarding internet availability and interruptions that have caused blackouts in the livestreaming and recording of meetings. During these periods we have postponed the meeting until the system corrects itself to allow the meeting to be open and transparent. The upgraded version has a physical encoder that's located

onsite at the municipal office that would allow us to keep records of all videos, even during internet disruptions.

Data Records

The current system does not allow tracking of the number of views each meeting receives from the public. The upgraded version provides access to reporting data and metrics of performance and viewership.

Incamera Splash Screen

There is no function to show that Council is in an InCamera meeting. Instead we have installed a temporary paper sign in-front of the camera and we have muted the microphones for that portion of the meeting. The upgraded version has customizable splash screens that can electronically be put up on the screen for the public to see.

Presentation View

The current system does not allow the capability of switching from Council view to presentation view to allow residents watching from home the ability to follow along with presenters or to view portions of the agenda Council is referring to throughout the meeting. The upgraded version can switch the livestreaming view from Council, to presentation, to agenda seamlessly.

Virtual Meetings

Our current system only allows livestreaming of the Council chambers and does not provide the capability for virtual or remote meetings. The upgraded version has the option to livestream and record meetings virtually, as well as a hybrid model which allows livestreaming a meeting with some members in person and some members participating electronically.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

The current Livestreaming and Meeting Management Services and support costs are \$23,940 annually which has been included in the 2021 budget.

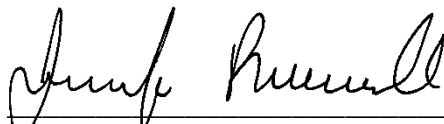
The upgraded option has a one-time implementation fee of \$650 which includes setup and training and an annual subscription fee of \$6,000 with a fee increase of approximately 5% annually. Installation time is 2 – 4 weeks depending on the delivery of the encoder and eSCRIBES's staff availability for setup and training. It is recommended that these fees be paid out of modernization funding in 2021, and be included in future annual budgets.

SUMMARY:

Our current livestreaming system has been extremely beneficial in allowing Council and Committee meetings to be open and transparent. It has made meetings more accessible to those at home and those unable to attend Council meetings. There are however other capabilities that would be beneficial. A summary table has been included below for reference.

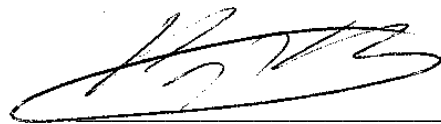
	Current technology (Webcasting Lite)	New technology (Webcasting Plus)
Recording Issues	Virtual encoder to record and livestream meetings. Internet issues cause interruptions	Physical encoder on site to allow the municipality a record of all video, even if there are internet interruptions
Data Records	No recorded records for viewership	Access to reporting and metrics of performance and viewership
In Camera Splash Screens	No splash screen to inform viewers when meeting is in closed session	Customizable splash screens for closed meetings
Presentation View	Council chambers view is the only view available	Switch the webcast feed between in-room presentations and speakers for a custom look
Virtual Meetings	Meetings can only be done in person	Option for virtual and hybrid (in person and online) meetings

Respectfully submitted,



Jennifer Russell,
Deputy Clerk

Approved by,



Ken Kelly,
CAO