

**PIERCE COUNTY WISCONSIN**  
**INFORMATION SERVICES**  
**412 W. KINNE STREET, P.O. BOX 120**  
**ELLSWORTH, WI 54011**  
**715-273-1122**



**Janet Huppert – Director**

**Information Services Department**  
**2023 Annual Report**

To the Honorable Pierce County Board of Supervisors:

The mission of the Pierce County Information Services Department is to provide the appropriate computer tools, communications equipment, and technological services to enable county employees to operate at maximum efficiency within affordable technologies while remaining compatible with the operating environment of the networked computer systems. The Information Services Department is also responsible for processing the bi-weekly payroll, processing and printing all county checks, other county financial system processing, programming as needed for various departmental systems and updating and growing the county web page. During 2023 the Information Services Committee, which is the standing committee for the Information Services Department, was made up of County Board members Michael Kahlow, Melissa Petersen, and Kris Sampson. The citizen members were Liz Gunderson and Paula Lugar.

The Pierce County hardware infrastructure as of December 31, 2023 included 110 desktop PCs, 221 laptops, 21 Chromebooks, 8 tablets, 91 printers and 28 copiers. Pierce County also had 17 servers with a mix of operating systems. The Information Services Department also supports the county cell phones through 2 cell carriers. At the end of 2023 the county had 142 smartphones, 1 flip cell phone and 36 air cards/wireless cell connections.

Information Services supports a wide variety of software applications. In addition to the Microsoft core applications that people are running there are departmental specific applications in almost every department, several state systems, a county financial package, a county imaging package, a county email system which includes shared county calendars, the County website and several applications that have been programmed by Pierce County employees.

A summary of the 2023 financial statement for Information Services is as follows:

<u>Budgeted Amount</u>	<u>Expenditures</u>	<u>End Balance</u>
\$797,123	\$786,510	\$10,613

Employees of the Information Services Department:

Janet Huppert - Director  
Steve Gustafson – Network Administrator  
Jon Dohrer – Programmer/Analyst

Tim Anderson – Lead Computer Technician  
Craig Hager – Computer Technician

The main departmental goals established for 2023 were:

- ◆ Create and maintain an environment of continuous improvement and innovation
- ◆ Enhance the Cybersecurity Plan for the County
- ◆ Implement the 2023 Information Services department budget which includes a project to move to a more modern document management system.

### Overview of the Year

The Information Services department is a very busy department. Everything involves computers and security is at the forefront now more than ever. The Information Services Department was kept busy in 2023 implementing the things budgeted for which included new hardware and software implementations while being short staffed due to unplanned leaves. Hardware needs to be continually upgraded and software needs to be continually upgraded, patched and tweaked. The bad actors that play in the cyber sphere have been hard at it and aren't making life regarding technology any easier. The Information Services department staff did an excellent job of keeping everything going this past year and providing excellent customer service.

As well as implementing new things to continue to move the County forward, we have kept what we have going and stayed within budget. In addition to the end user daily support we did, the Information Services Department was responsible for researching, ordering and implementing several projects throughout the county in 2023. The highlights of the past year are as follows.

### Software

- One of the biggest projects in 2023 was getting a new modern document imaging system going. This replaced one the County had used for over 20 years. Since this was replacing such an old system the implementation involved not only the transfer of data but departmental discovery and working on new work flows partially due to the capabilities of the new system. We also got a piece of this software going to link our maps in Land Management. This gives us more control than having to go through a 3<sup>rd</sup> party for programming. There was a separate implementation of this software for the Child Support unit due to the modernization for their unit. The way they are using the new system is very different than the old one. This also included an integration with a State system to cut down on entry.
- We transitioned to a new remote support product that is FIPS 140-2 and HIPAA compliant so we can do remote computer support for the entire County.
- The County switched from DocuSign to PandaDoc and was able to save \$15,000 with a 3-year contract for the same functionality.
- A FIPS 140-2 and HIPAA compliant program was rolled out to a couple of departments that need highly encrypted email and deal with very large faxes.
- Programming was done in the Human Services system to transition the ADRC over to use that as their main records management system going forward.
- We continue to be vigilant regarding viruses, malware and spyware. We have current defenses on our perimeter but occasionally something gets through that shouldn't and it is dealt with in a timely manner.
- We continue to support all departments with their departmental software packages with things like keeping patches current, doing updates and resolving network issues. Timely patching is done on servers as well as major upgrades on countywide applications like the county financial system.
- We have a very active and timely county web page and county intranet which include up to date calendars, agendas, minutes, employment opportunities and other county items of interest. We also provide an avenue for county municipalities to have a web presence. The IS Department ended up taking over the ongoing postings on the County website for the municipalities as a shift of duties due to staffing.

## Hardware

- The entire fleet of cell phones for the Sheriff's department were upgraded. This department has phones on both Verizon and AT&T FirstNet.
- An infrastructure upgrade was done at Reproductive Health in River Falls. An old server was pulled out and a new workflow was implemented that allows them to use the servers in Ellsworth.
- 8 desktops, 42 laptops, 3 tablets, 39 monitors, 2 printers and 4 copiers were purchased, configured and set up for end users. 3 servers were also purchased, configured, had data transferred and were put into production. A lot of solid-state hard drives were rolled out to make equipment faster and to extend equipment life.
- Everything that has lived its useful life is responsibly recycled through our Solid Waste Department annually and tracked. Equipment is also repurposed where it makes sense.
- The Information Services department maintains all county technology related hardware which includes troubleshooting and performing repairs when necessary.

## Contracts and Planning

- The contract to cover the new document imaging system was put together and executed.
- The County Internet contract was renewed at a cost savings with the installation of a new Internet circuit.
- A lot of research was done this year for data backup systems for County data, archiving cell phone text messages, alternative hardware warranties, and server virtualization. This included several demos.
- All warranty contracts for technology related items were renewed in a timely manner.
- Contracts are all reviewed annually to make sure the County is getting the best pricing on all technology related goods and services.

## Miscellaneous

- The County flipped long distance carriers from CenturyLink to AT&T due to an excessive circuit price hike that we got hit with without any notice.
- A Cybersecurity training program was launched which strengthens our cyber posture. Everyone with a County email address is required to watch a short video monthly on different cyber related topics and a short assessment needs to be completed. Questions that come up due to this training are used as educational opportunities.
- We helped get an electronic reservation system going at the Nugget Lake County Park.
- IS helped move several people due to office moves internally.
- We did the activations and setups for 56 new employees (it was 35 in 2021 and 60 in 2022) and deactivations for 48 employees (it was 32 in 2021 and 62 in 2022).
- Pierce County continues to be an active member of the GIPAW group which is the state of Wisconsin technology group for county and municipal government as well as NACo (National Association of Counties) County Tech Xchange. The relationships that have been built over the years by attending the GIPAW meetings with my counterparts in other counties are a great benefit to Pierce County. I also resurrected the NWWCCC which is a regional group of IS Directors for area Counties and Cities. This group hadn't met for several years and currently most of the Directors are new to their roles.

The main proposed departmental goals for 2024 are:

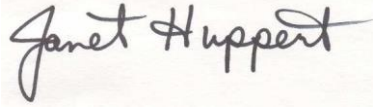
- ◆ Create and maintain an environment of continuous improvement and innovation
- ◆ Enhance the Cybersecurity Plan for the County
- ◆ Implement the 2024 Information Services department budget which includes a new data backup system and a virtualized server.

The Information Services Department will continue to provide a stable high-speed network, the appropriate equipment (both hardware and software) needed by each employee for them to be able to do their county job and have staff available to help county employees as needed in a timely fashion. We are continuing to

try to replace roughly 1/5 of the total computers annually in order to keep our computers at a level that they will be able to run current software and work with other peripherals. We will continue to move technology forward to increase efficiencies across the county.

Please contact me if you have questions or need additional information regarding the Information Services Department operations. I may be reached at 715-273-1122 or [huppert@co.pierce.wi.us](mailto:huppert@co.pierce.wi.us) .

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Janet Huppert". The signature is written in a cursive style and is placed on a light-colored, rectangular background.

Janet Huppert  
Director of Information Services  
March 14, 2024