

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 2020 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 2020 the Information Services Committee, which is the standing committee for the Information Services Department, was made up of County Board members Michael Kahlow, Jon Aubart and Jeff Bjork. The citizen members were Mary-Alice Muraski and Jeff Olson.

The Pierce County computer infrastructure as of December 31, 2020 included 144 desktop PCs (down 5%), 202 laptops (up 30%), 21 Chromebooks (had 2 in 2019), 7 tablets and 93 printers. Pierce County also had 24 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 2020 the county had 131 smartphones (up 31%), 13 flip cell phones and 38 air cards/wireless cell connections (up 27%). The percentages are in comparison to what the County had December 31, 2019. The increase in laptops and cell devices was due to how business was being done differently in 2020 due to COVID.

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 and several applications that have been programmed by Pierce County employees.

A summary of the 2020 financial statement for Information Services is as follows:

<u>Budgeted Amount</u>	<u>Expenditures</u>	<u>End Balance</u>
\$856,362	\$838,938	\$17,424

Employees of the Information Services Department:

Steve Gustafson – Network Administrator
Jean Behringer – Programmer/Analyst

Tim Anderson – Computer Technician
Jake Vorwald – Computer Technician

The main departmental goals that were established and met for 2020 were:

- ◆ Create and maintain an environment of continuous improvement and innovation.
- ◆ Work to modernize the current County Webpage.

Overview of the Year

The saying about “the only thing constant in life is change” pretty well sums up how 2020 went. No one could have predicted the pivot we made in the work force once COVID hit and working remotely became very real very fast last March for a large portion of the County work force. Half of March and a good part of April were dedicated to everything that needed to be done to get people working remotely. All laptops we had on hand were upgraded and flipped out the door as quickly as possible, cellphones and webcams were ordered, everyone learned how a VPN worked and work processes were changed to accommodate the new normal. After the initial push to get people working remotely we then focused on remote meetings. We went through a couple of different platforms and had some issues early on but remote meetings are now a standard part of County life. After that there were some funding opportunities that allowed us to get equipment that wasn’t budgeted for to plan for how to work remotely for as long as needed and to get things in place that will help the County going forward post COVID. Throughout all of the changes we have been through this past year the business of the County continued and overall things continued to move forward.

The way the Information Services department supported the County changed greatly in 2020. There is much more remote support now. A lot of troubleshooting was done for remote access issues and we helped a lot with setting up Zoom and WebEx meetings. Even if people were in the office everything was dealt with by phone or through remote meetings instead of face to face. We had to come up with contingency plans to find hardware when shortages happened. The pace of work for the Information Services department never slowed down during 2020 as what we had to focus on just kept changing. We ended up doing software implementations remotely and even did a hardware refresh for the entire DA’s office due to the restrictions of travel for the employees of the State of Wisconsin. The Information Services department staff did an excellent job of keeping everything going during rather trying times.

As well as implementing new things we have kept what we have going and stayed within the 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 2020. The highlights of the past year are as follows.

Software

- Office 2019 was purchased and installed on the machines in the first year of a two year project to upgrade all Office licenses due to end of life for Office 2010.
- New County pay code setups and new billing rules for Human Services had to be done due to COVID and new rules for time keeping and billing.
- CLTS was pulled out of FileMaker and built in Avatar. This was done totally remotely.
- The County Webpage was totally redesigned and is now cloud hosted. This was done to make it ADA compliant, more fully searchable, have shorter URLs and a more modern look and feel.
- The main departmental software was upgraded for the Veteran’s and Solid Waste departments.
- We got Child Support setup to use AppXtender for document imaging.
- An electronic per diem form was created and is now being used.
- We evaluated and came up with better software to do remote support.
- 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. We continue to modify and

support shared databases as well as create new ones as requested. 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.

Hardware

- Chromebooks were deployed to all 17 County Board Supervisors to make it easier for them to connect to remote meetings. This included training sessions that the Information Services department held when the Chromebooks were handed out.
- Video equipment was procured so 3 future conference rooms in the Courthouse Annex and the PCOB will be able to do remote meetings. Equipment was also procured for the new County Boardroom, new Courtroom and the EOC to increase their remote meeting capabilities. Since the Boardroom and Courtroom were new construction there was additional work done in those 2 locations to get them functional.
- A grant was awarded that allowed the County to have a telehealth setup.
- 34 of the Sheriff's Department AT&T FirstNet cell phones were upgraded due to eligibility and an attempt to get them to work better. The reception issues were not acceptable on a number of these lines after this upgrade so 20 of them went back to Verizon and new Verizon phones were deployed for them.
- A lot of effort was put into getting the fax machines to work with the new IP Flex PRI line.
- 39 Verizon phones were ordered in December to upgrade very old cell phones. Since the replacement phones were at no charge to the County this save quite a bit of money.
- 19 desktops, 63 laptops, 19 Chromebooks, 51 webcams, 46 monitors, 10 personal scanners, and 6 printers were purchased, configured and set up for end users. 1 fax machine, 7 Meraki wireless access points, 4 copiers and 1 server were also purchased and installed. Everything that has lived its useful life is responsibly recycled through our Solid Waste Department 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

- At budget time I took a good look at all departments and we replaced some desktops with laptops a year early to have additional flexibility if needed due to ongoing remote work requirements.
- In addition to helping the rest of the County work as remotely as possible, we had to come up with a departmental plan so we could continue to support everyone else if our staff got COVID. We came up with remote rotations to minimize exposure, so we always had everything covered.
- We looked into and signed a contract to go from a 250 Mbps internet circuit to a 1GB circuit partially due to the remote connections that are now part of daily County life.
- Contracts are all reviewed annually to make sure the County is getting the best pricing on all technology related goods and services such as telephony.

Miscellaneous

- Unfortunately, two of our major vendors had data breaches that affected us. None of our data was compromised but there was a lot of work we needed to do due to changes both of those companies had to make as a result of their breaches.
- We did the activations and setups for 44 new employees and deactivations for 26 employees.
- We helped move 5 people in Administration due to restructuring as well as a number of other people due to office moves internally.
- 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. After COVID hit I also joined the NACo

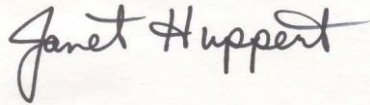
(National Association of Counties) County Tech Xchange. This is basically a National version of GIPAW. This allowed me to see what counties in other states were doing to cope with COVID and the myriad of issues we needed to address. This group has also had some extremely good scenario-based training that I took advantage of as it was free to the member counties. The relationships that have been built over the years by attending the GIPAW meetings with my counterparts in other counties were a great benefit to Pierce County this past year as we bounced things off each other to keep moving our counties forward.

The main proposed departmental goals for 2021 are:

- ◆ Create and maintain an environment of continuous improvement and innovation
- ◆ Enhance the Cybersecurity Plan for the County
- ◆ Implement the 2021 Information Services department budget

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 about 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 .

Respectfully submitted,



Janet Huppert
Director of Information Services
March 29, 2021