

Bartlett Park District

Strategic Planning Process: 2021-2025

Strategic Area: Technology

Goal Priority 1: FY2021-22



Background

In the Technology Section of the District's Strategic Planning Process for 2021-2025, Goal Priority 1 is: Explore District-wide technology opportunities to enhance how the District operates, serves, registers, programs, and maintains our facilities and parks with the goal of increased operational efficiency. The committee that worked on this goal was chaired by Eric Leninger (Superintendent of Business Services) and committee members included Amy McKinley (Bartlett Community Center Office Manager), Jessica Meyers (Parks, Golf, & Fleet Manager), Dale Erdman (Information Technology Manager), and Meagan Rawls (Human Resources Manager). Work for Goal Priority 1 began in June 2021, and culminates with this report in March 2022.

The committee took the following action steps to arrive at this report:

- Evaluate usage of technology by current staff/operations;
- Review departmental workflows and note inefficiencies;
- Identify ways technology can help improve upon inefficiencies; and,
- Evaluate overlap in inefficiencies across departments.

Implications

The committee was designed to represent all areas of the District, and identified several areas, either by physical location or the type of service offered, in which technology is utilized to operate and serve the community:

- Bartlett Community Center Front Desk/Registration;
- LIFECenter Health & Fitness Club;
- Aquatics (Bartlett Aquatic Center & Splash Central);
- Parks & Fleet Maintenance;
- Districtwide hardware & software;
- Human Resources;
- Accounting;
- Golf (Villa Olivia & Apple Orchard);
- Villa Olivia Winter Sports; and,
- Food & Beverage.

In evaluating the use of technology in each of the aforementioned areas, the committee noted several items to be kept in mind as operations were evaluated and recommendations made. These items included:

- Importance of assessing capabilities and needs of current (and future) staff in utilization of technology;
- Does implementation of technology necessarily lead to greater efficiencies or can old-school, (such as paper & pen), be just as effective;
- Each department utilizes different workflows, and needs to be examined individually (one-size might not fit all);
- New or additional technology requires additional training and support. Costs and technological support are crucial at implementation and with ongoing use; and,
- Some technology might be more forward-facing (customer-orientated), but back-end processing needs to be examined, too. Is technology that makes transactions easier for the customer making processing harder for staff? Where is the balance between customer service and staff workload capabilities?
- Balancing of transaction costs. Online reservation applications caused the District to incur larger than initially anticipated fees for processing transactions in the current fiscal year.

The committee identified four specific areas with Districtwide implications that currently utilize technology, but could benefit from streamlining operations across departments. Each will be identified and discussed below.

Area #1: Use of Scheduling Applications by Employees

The District has many areas of operations. Each area utilizes numerous part-time employees, many of whom work seasonally. Scheduling shift coverage for areas such as Bartlett Aquatic Center (in the summer) and Villa Olivia Winter Sports (in the winter) is a fluid operation that can require daily changes. In the past, each part-time employee would communicate with their respective manager when a shift change was needed, and the manager would then communicate with other part-time staff. In recent years, scheduling applications have become more popular. These scheduling applications allow part-time employees to log-in, view available shifts, and even swap or trade shifts when necessary, all from the convenience of their smart-phone or home computer. Across the District, there are currently two different scheduling applications being utilized: HomeBase is being utilized at the LIFECenter, and When 2 Work is being utilized in Aquatics at Bartlett Aquatic Center and Splash Central. HomeBase is currently being utilized in

the “free” form (meaning, neither the District nor the employee pays a fee), while the District currently pays just over \$650.00 annually for When 2 Work. Each application has different intricacies, and offers additional features with elevated price structures.

Area #2: Point of Sale Software and access terminals

The District utilizes many different types of software in order to process daily operations. RecTrac has long been used to register households for recreation programs, GolfNow has been used for tee time reservations at the Villa Olivia golf course, and SiriusWare has been used to reserve and process food & beverage transactions. Since the COVID pandemic, customers have become more accustomed to utilizing online scheduling software to reserve times for recreational opportunities that formerly did not accept reservations. Two prime examples of this are the use of Only Sky for Villa Olivia Winter Sports, and FunFangle for Bartlett Aquatic Center. In addition, for the 2022 golf season at Apple Orchard, the GolfTrac application through RecTrac is being utilized for online tee time reservations. Each of the aforementioned software applications offers unique operational efficiencies. However, they each have a cost and lead to additional processing time when staff is tallying-up totals for items such as payroll, revenue, and usage fees. In addition, the terminals used to accept electronic payments for each type of software differ.

Area #3: Financial Software and Human Resources Information System (HRIS)

The District currently utilizes SmartFusion from Harris Local Government to process all accounts payable, budget preparation, fund ledger, and purchasing transactions. The District has been with SmartFusion for just under 10 years, and replacement of financial software is slotted on the capital replacement and improvement plan sometime in the next 3-5 years. The District currently utilizes Paycom for payroll, timecard, and HRIS functions. Prior to migrating to Paycom in late 2019, the District processed payroll and utilized the limited HRIS functions in SmartFusion. The District pays annual maintenance fees for both SmartFusion and Paycom.

Area #4: Employee workforce software (Microsoft Office Suite)

The District currently utilizes the 2016 and 2019 versions of the Microsoft Office suite, which are installed locally on each machine with files stored on-site in a storage area network (SAN) device. Microsoft Office includes multiple applications that staff use Districtwide, such as Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Publisher, and Outlook. Microsoft is gradually transitioning from storing files in an on premise application to storing files in a cloud-based application, such as Microsoft Office 365. For each user of Microsoft Office, the District must purchase a license. The license is valid for as

long as that version of Office is in use. The District balances the need to maintain the most current version of the product with cost effectiveness, and always ensures that once support is discontinued for a certain version, that version is phased-out. While cloud-based software (such as Microsoft Office 365) generally involves a higher upfront licensing cost, it also eliminates the need for an on-site storage device (SAN), as more data is stored off-site in the cloud as opposed to in an on-site device (this includes Districtwide e-mail storage). By moving electronic storage from on-site to the cloud, the District will save money in hardware costs that will help offset increased fees for individual licenses.

Recommendations

Based on the points discussed above, the committee has recommendations for each of the four areas identified.

Area #1: Use of Scheduling Applications by Employees

Scheduling applications appear to be here to stay, and both the younger part-time workforce of the District that helps staff daily operations, and the overseeing full-time managers, appear to appreciate the flexibility offered by scheduling applications. By further identifying the specific needs of each department, the District could migrate to a single scheduling application to be used Districtwide. The fully-optioned business version of HomeBase costs approximately \$850.00 per year, and the version of when to work currently being used by the District costs \$725.00 per year. Paycom, also offers a scheduling add-on, but this feature would cost approximately \$4,000.00 per year. Additional scheduling applications that the Committee found were Acuity Scheduling (\$600.00 per year for fully-optioned version and Connecteam \$1,900.00 per year for fully-optioned version). Even with a marginal cost increase to what the District currently pays, migrating to a single scheduling application could be a valuable tool used to attract new employees to the District, especially in a labor market where nearly every nearby district suffers from hiring woes. Further, when employees cross-over between departments, they would be able to utilize the same scheduling application instead of learning something new.

Area #2: Point of Sale Software and access terminals

The District utilizes many different software applications to process transactions. As applications are evaluated and potentially upgraded in each off-season, staff should utilize opportunities to combine usage of multiple softwares when efficiencies can be increased and costs decreased. However, this is not always easy. Having the same tee time reservation software at both golf

courses sounds like a good idea in theory; but the way fees are charged currently does not make this advantageous to the District. GolfNow operates on a trade-based system (meaning, fees are paid by giving the value of certain reservations), which makes sense for a high-volume course like Villa Olivia, but would eat-into too much revenue for a lower-volume course such as Apple Orchard. The operational efficiencies of GolfTrac will be evaluated after this season at Apple Orchard, but GolfTrac lacks the sport-specific popularity of GolfNow. Ideally, if a software existed that could service both golf courses while encompassing food & beverage, that would be ideal.

Only Sky and FunFangle have been largely popular with customers in the winter sports and summer aquatics seasons. However, they have led to increased fees and increased time for processing revenue and recording usage fees. As online reservation softwares become more and more popular, staff should evaluate the possibility of combining these two applications into a single software. (A picture of the check-in station using an iPad/card reader for the FunFangle terminal at Bartlett Aquatic Center is below).



Area #3: Financial Software and Human Resources Information System (HRIS)

In 3-5 years, when the District begins to look at upgrading its financial software, staff should evaluate the option of combining financial and HRIS functions into a single package. This would house all data under the same banner, lead to increased efficiencies in processing, and hopefully save on costs. The challenge with this is while many software applications are designed for the private sector, few are designed with the government sector in mind. Just as governmental fund accounting differs from general accounting in the private sector, the needs of a governmental workforce vary greatly as well. Multiple job code(s) with varying rate(s) of pay, including per-unit pay structures are all found frequently across park districts, but seldom in the private sector. The District realized some of these growing pains when migrating to Paycom as we found limitations of the software in adding/removing multiple job codes for employees. Finding that all-in-one software is easier in theory than in practice.

Area #4: Employee workforce software (Microsoft Office Suite)

Transitioning from on-site storage to cloud-based storage is the wave of the future. Even individual applications such as the aforementioned GolfNow are transitioning to cloud-based platforms (in the case of GolfNow, the new software is titled G1). As the District reaches end-of-life capacities for both software licenses and hardware capabilities, which will happen 4-5 years from now, Staff must be cognizant to balance the cost of moving from on-site storage to more cloud-based (off-site) storage. While the District must always be prudent in the use of the public's funds, Staff must also ensure the District stays up-to-date with technology, and is not left behind in the world of cyberspace.

Conclusion

Just as technology is constantly evolving, so must the District. While there are many other forms of technology the Bartlett Park District utilizes every day, this committee feels the District would be best served by focusing on these four areas: scheduling, point of sale, financial software, and employee workforce software, in evaluating and making decisions for the future.