

Borough of Emmaus, Pa.

Removing manual steps from agenda creation workflows



Proving a return on technology investments is becoming ever-more critical for government organizations as budgets are tightened and tax revenues dwindle.

In late 2015, staff at the Borough of Emmaus, Pennsylvania (pop. 11,296), introduced new software to overhaul council meeting agenda preparation, and as a result, expect to save \$30,000 annually.

While the monetary savings alone are eye-opening, for Borough Manager Shane Pepe, the benefits are even more far-reaching.

“It’s just so much easier and less time-consuming to create an agenda,” Pepe said. “In all honesty, the software has made the job easier - a little more fluid. ... The logistical improvements are fantastic.”

‘A LOGISTICAL HEADACHE’

Prior to implementing agenda management software, Pepe and the Borough Secretary relied on an entirely paper-based, manual method of agenda creation.

As items for upcoming meetings came into the Borough Manager’s office, paper copies would be printed out and placed in binders for each Council member, the Borough Solicitor, and the local press.

As more items came in, the paper shuffling and re-shuffling began, with hundreds of pieces of paper used for the Borough Council’s every-other-week meetings.

Once the agenda binders were finalized the Friday before Council meetings, the Borough Secretary would take them to the police station, and officers would deliver them to Council Members’ homes. Meanwhile, Pepe would drive 14 miles to deliver a copy to the Borough Solicitor’s office. In all, 10 binders - and sometimes more depending on the scope of the meeting - had to be delivered throughout the Borough.

SUCCESS HIGHLIGHTS

- Estimated \$30,000 in paper and time savings
- Stopped printing hundreds of pieces of paper for bi-weekly Council meetings
- Agendas now created and compiled through cloud-base software
- Removed staff time spent manually delivering agenda binders
- Digitally deliver agenda packets via tablet devices

FAST FACTS

Agency Type: Borough

Population: 11,296

Solution:

Peak Agenda
Management
Meeting Efficiency
iLegislate

Active Since: 2015

“The amount of man hours - it was labor intensive. My officers could be doing a lot of other things besides driving packets around town,” Pepe said. “And the Borough would have to pay me and pay my mileage for driving agendas to the Solicitor’s office. Our binder for the budget, for instance, was sometimes over 1,000 pages. It really was a logistical headache.”

A CATALYST FOR CHANGE

Pepe, his staff, and the Borough Council had known for years there was a better way to compile, create and distribute agenda items and agendas, but for one reason or another, the trigger was never pulled.

Finally, when Pepe did a cost analysis to determine what the Borough would stand to gain if a system were put in place, the potential savings were enough to spur action.

“Our cost analysis on what an agenda management software would cost versus what we could save was revealing,” Pepe said. “We looked at both the hard costs and the soft costs - which is definitely something you have to do - and it was evident that we would come out ahead.”

One critical component of the move, Pepe says, was the support of the Borough Council.

“Over the years I had started sending more things to the Council electronically,” Pepe said. “When we finally said it’s time to make the leap, Council was all-in. That was a major facet. Without that buy-in, there was no change that was going to happen.”

ENTER: PEAK AGENDA MANAGEMENT

Once the decision was made to adopt an agenda management solution, Pepe went about looking for the right fit for the Borough.

After seeing five vendor demonstrations to compare functionality and cost, Pepe and the Borough determined Granicus’ Peak Agenda

Management solution was the best fit for meeting their needs.

A completely cloud-based software, Peak helps streamline and improve the drafting, approval and publishing of agenda items and files for public meetings with configurable approval workflows, drag-and-drop editing and real-time agenda compilation.

Combined with Granicus’ iLegislate application, which allows for instant digital delivery of agenda packets via tablet devices, the Borough’s meeting preparation process has been transformed.

No more binders and printing hundreds of sheets of paper, and no more trips to deliver the completed agenda.

“Everything is right there in front of you online. There’s no more searching through paper - we have everything we need with a couple clicks,” Pepe said. “And iLegislate is just fantastic. The flow on the agenda in the app is fantastic for the Council. The first time they used it, they had no training. They went in cold turkey, clicked the button to download the packet, and they just breezed through it.

“It’s obviously a change to go to a system that you have to pay for, but our cost savings and our time savings and efficiency is definitely measurable.”

