
From paper driven to paperless operation

by Peter Bodley
Managing editor

Anoka County is transforming one of its largest departments from a paper driven to a paperless operation.

The Anoka County Board has unanimously taken action to purchase and maintain software for automation of the Income Maintenance (IM) Department.

Total project costs of \$2.2 million have been included in the county's capital improvements budget and spread over several years through the purchase of short-term capital notes.

The implementation project will begin Jan. 1, 2011 and is expected to be completed by May 31, 2012, although Director of Information Services Cindy Kevern is hoping the implementation timeline can be shortened to February 2012, she said.

On the recommendation of its Information Services Committee, the county board, without dissent, approved three actions.

- Agreement with eDocument Resources for the implementation of OnBase and Compass software for an amount not to exceed \$708,092 plus a change order allowance of \$65,000.
- Purchase of OnBase imaging software licenses in the amount of \$201,412.62 plus ongoing maintenance costs of \$33,226 a year beginning Jan. 1, 2012.
- Purchase of Compass case management software licenses in the amount of \$440,196.06 with ongoing maintenance costs of \$80,967 annually effective Jan. 1, 2012.

Other project costs will include the purchase of scanners, signature pads, database software and hardware, according to a report from Kevern and Director of Income Maintenance Edna Hoium to County Commissioner Robyn West, chairwoman of the Information Services Committee.

Income maintenance is one of the largest county departments with a 2011 budget set at \$26,533,647.

The implementation of OnBase and Compass will assist with the management of documents for the some 21,000 open public assistance cases that the department is handling right now, the report from Kevern and Hoium states.

"The goal of the project is to improve efficiency and ease workload demands on staff," they said.

Both said the project will saved the county money in the long run.

The automation project will increase efficiency in the area of managing electronic documents, enhance the management of intake and appointment activity and comply with privacy, retention and destruction regulations, according to Kevern and Hoium.

Prior to the county board moving ahead with project implementation, eDocument Resources provided a business analysis and implementation services under contract with the county board.

The planning phase included a detailed review of current business practices and completing documentation of how the software will be configured and business processes changed to accommodate a cost-effective implementation of this new software, Kevern and Hoium wrote in their report.

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Under its contract with the county, eDocument Resources, among other implementation tasks, will provide staff training on the new systems, testing and go-live activities and delivery of ongoing support services.

Functions of the new system will cover income maintenance appointments, case management, file management, forms management, intake, mail processing and integration for the state-shared Master Index and Right Fax programs.

The department employs 209 people at two main locations – the Anoka County Government Center and the Anoka County Human Service Center in Blaine – as well as at two small neighborhood offices, one in Columbia Heights and the other in Lexington, according to Hoiium.

Since planning started on the project a year ago, the caseload has jumped from 18,000 to 21,000, Hoiium said.

The software to be purchased can be used with the department's existing computers and monitors; no new computers need to be purchased, she said.

There will be an immediate financial and efficiency impact for the department when the project goes online in 2012 – case files and case file folders will no longer have to be purchased and stored, Hoiium said.

Packages of the hard cardboard case file folders, which are needed because of the complexity of the cases, cost \$10,000, she said.

In addition, case file drawers in employees' offices are full of files and there is no room for any more case file drawers, Hoiium said

“And our caseloads keep multiplying,” she said.

“We are real happy with this decision.”

According to KeVERN, the project is a “big jump” for the income maintenance department and there will be a lot of efficiencies by going paperless.

Income maintenance is a large department that provides critical services to people, said County Commissioner Jim Kordiak, who with West comprises the board's Information Services Committee.

“This is a big project and I am happy to see it move to paperless with a lot of financial economies,” he said.

The county will save money through this project with the reduction in people time that it will bring, West said.

Paperless operations are becoming the norm all over the world, she said.

The programs that income maintenance administrators include:

- Cash programs (General Assistance, Minnesota Family Investment Program, Diversionary Work Program, Minnesota Supplemental Aid and Refugee Cash Assistance).
- Child support – enforcement, establishment and paternity.
- Emergency programs (Emergency Assistance, Emergency General Assistance, Emergency General Assistance Medical Care, Emergency Minnesota Supplemental Aid).
- Food support program formerly known as food stamps.
- Funeral funds.
- Housing referral assistance.
- Medical programs, which include General Assistance Medical Care, Medical Assistance, Medical Assistance for Employed Persons with Disabilities,

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Medical Assistance for Long-Term Care Services,
MinnesotaCare and Refugee Medical Assistance.

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