

Port council says yes to computer age

Written by KRISTYN HALBIG ZIEHM
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Aldermen agree to go paperless and conduct city business on laptops, iPads

Port Washington aldermen will be getting laptops and iPads to conduct city business on as the Common Council initiates a plan to go paperless, aldermen agreed last week.

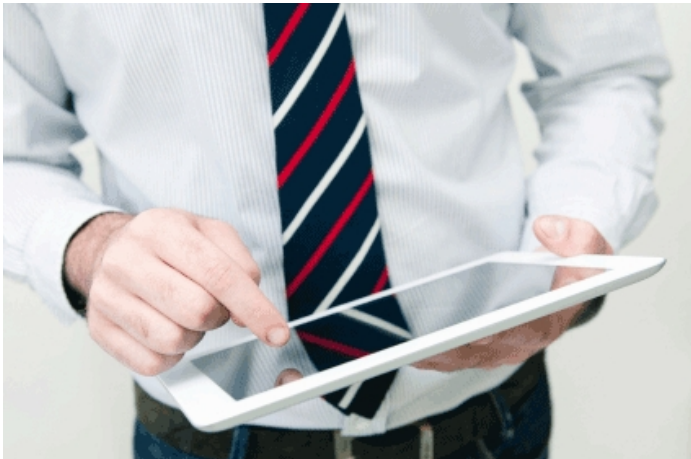
But not every aldermen will be getting the same computer or tablet. After discussion Tuesday, the council agreed that each alderman could select the device he is most comfortable using.

City Administrator Mark Grams researched five brands of computers — three laptops and two tablets — priced at \$340 to \$500.

Aldermen had mixed reactions to the list, with different recommendations from many of them.

“If you want to look at ‘Made in America,’ there are two ways to go,” Ald. Kevin Rudser said.

Ald. Bill Driscoll said he wanted a unit that would be easy to take notes with, while Ald. Dave Larson promoted the iPad, saying it allows the user to take notes using a stylus.



“It’s the easiest to use,” he said. “It’s a lot more intuitive. It just kind of works.”

Simplicity was sought by Ald. Paul Neumyer, who called himself “technically challenged.”

“I have enough trouble with Word 7,” he said. “Please don’t embarrass me.”

Ald. Mike Ehrlich, who said he’s “a paper guy,” concurred, adding he preferred a tablet to a laptop.

“The simpler you can make it, the better,” he said.

The goal in getting the computers is for the Common Council to become paperless, Mayor Tom Mlada said, holding up an inch-high sheath of paper.

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“I couldn’t be more excited about getting rid of all this paper,” he said.

A study by Grams showed that the city will break even on the computer purchase in less than two years — the term of office for an alderman. That’s because the city will not only be using less paper, it will also be significantly reducing the amount of time needed to compile agendas and the supporting paperwork and sending them out to officials.

The computers will remain city property even as aldermen use them throughout their terms, officials were told.

“Only city business is to be conducted on it,” Mlada said. “At the end of your term, you’re handing back the unit.”