



**M E M O R A N D U M**  
**F i n a n c e   D e p a r t m e n t**

**DATE:** April 26, 2005

**TO:** City Council

**FROM:** Dave Warren  
Director of Finance

**SUBJECT: LAUNCHING THE NEW WEBSITE**

---

**RECOMMENDATION:**

Authorize the Director of Finance to launch the new City website as presented.

**DISCUSSION:**

Approximately four years ago, the Council accelerated the City into the information super highway by authorizing staff to proceed with a technology plan that included the creation of the City's website. Prior to that, the City hosted an online bulletin board. As a result of the Council authorizing the technology upgrade project, the City was able to develop its very first website (Phase I) which was basic in nature. Over the years, the City's website has provided the community with important information about City departments (e.g., names, addresses, and phone numbers, etc.), agendas and minutes from public meetings, historical facts about the City, some operational procedures, and a picture gallery.

Since that time, the demands and expectations of the City's website have grown. The Placerville Community, City Council, and City staff desire and deserve a website with more horsepower. They expect the website to be more user-friendly, useful, informational, interactive, and aesthetically pleasing. Staff also recognized the need for website software known as a Content Management System (CMS) which would streamline the way the City updates and edits its new website.

In response to these demands, the Council authorized a contract with Civica Software in April 2003, to provide a new CMS and assist staff in redeveloping the website (Phase II). Staff has spent hundreds of hours creating the new website navigation, writing new website content, designing the website architecture, and making numerous revisions. Tonight, staff will present the fruits of this endeavor and respectfully requests the Council's authorization to "launch" the new website for public consumption.



## ANALYSIS:

Shortly before executing the contract with Civica Software, staff explored a plethora of other municipal websites including cities, counties, and special districts to gather information and ideas for the City's website architecture (e.g., graphic design, color palette, artwork, and photographs), navigation (outline or web path surfers will follow), content (written verbage) and online features. In finding a suitable comparison for Placerville, staff considered the informational needs of the community, Council, and staff, demographics, local culture, recreational activities, local events, and a historical perspective in the scope of its research.

During our research, we discovered the website for the City of Bend, Oregon which was a "gold mine" full of ideas for Placerville's project. The City of Bend is similar to Placerville with its high quality of life, endless recreational opportunities, growing tourism industry, and semi-rural/small town atmosphere. Bend's site architecture has a warm, romantic feeling including earth tone colors, pictures depicting recreation and open space. The site navigation is methodical, and the content is well written and informative. These are all positive characteristics staff wanted to capture and emulate in Placerville's new website.

Staff also had the desire to design the new website's navigation so that surfers may find information from multiple access points. Each surfer thinks a little differently, and not all surfers may understand the organizational structure of local government. For this reason, staff felt it was important to interlink the departmental information, forms, and publications from several access points.

Taking all of this into consideration, staff worked collectively with Civica over the past two years to design a website that the Placerville community can be proud of. As indicated in previous staff reports to the Council, the website project has taken longer than originally anticipated. This was mostly due to limited staffing in the IT Division, workload impacts from other City projects, and changes in personnel. Up until this fiscal year, the project was progressing slowly. Fortunately, the Council authorized a \$20,052 Alternative Service Level (ASL) appropriation for additional IT services in the Fiscal Year 2004/2005 operating budget.

Management utilized the appropriation by hiring a temporary, part-time IT Technician to provide additional PC troubleshooting support as well as accelerate the website project. The City hired Christopher Cottingham as an IT Technician back in September 2004. In addition to his day-to-day Technician duties, Christopher has been a model liaison with Civica and City staff and has worked feverishly to finish the remainder of the project over the last three months. Christopher has brought much knowledge and expertise that the City so desperately needed to fast-track the project. With that, management would like to recognize Christopher for his invaluable contributions to the project.

Tonight, staff is pleased to present the new draft website for the Council's review and approval. Like a newly constructed home, the new website has that new house sparkle and is ready to move in and host a house-warming party. However, there are some landscaping and window treatments to attend to. Staff is very proud of this website, and recognizes that it's a work in progress. Additional photographs, content, and e-government features will be added in the coming months and years in Phase III of the project.

For now, the City's current website address, <http://www.ci.placerville.ca.us/> will remain the same. Upon Council approval, staff will "flip the switch" so that the new website can be viewed at the



<http://www.ci.placerville.ca.us/> address. Sometime in the next few months, Civica will provide training to departments in how to update and edit the department-specific sections of the website.

In the future, staff intends to implement several e-government solutions, with Council approval, as part of Phase III of the project to provide even more information to the community including :

- Online access to the City's Municipal Code
- Online access to City records (document imaging project)
- Online registration and Electronic Fund Transfer (EFT) for sports, special interest classes, and facility rentals
- Online application and EFT for business license tax utility payments
- Online application and EFT for utility bill payments
- Online access to the City's future (GIS) Geographic Information System (CIP #40322)

Staff will return to the Council with budget recommendations for the remaining components of Phase III at a later date.

**FISCAL IMPACT:**

There is no fiscal impact to launch the new website.

---

Dave Warren  
Director of Finance

Reviewed and Approved:

---

John Driscoll  
City Manager/City Attorney