Staff Report

CITIZEN REPORTING TOOL PRESENTATION

November 14, 2017

The City Council requested the development of a mobile customer service application/tool that provides citizens the ability to report infrastructure related issues within the community from their cell phones. The Public Works staff has been working to develop a mobile, web-based reporting tool to be tested within the Public Works Administration, Operations, and Traffic Divisions and Administrative Services that will allow citizen requests/reports on water, street, sidewalk, snow/ice, and traffic issues.

The current platform will be accessible through the City of Ames website and also a mobile hot link or shortcut that displays an icon on phones or iPads. The current tool is not available within the App or Play Store, but will look and function like an app through a shortcut icon. Staff will continue to test and develop the mobile reporting tool as an app with App Store and Play Store requirements. However, it should be understood that developing the tool as a true app requires meeting Apple and Google requirements. This can cause excessive delays when updates are desired.

The citizen reporting tool will be designed to accept non-emergency citizen reports which do not require an urgent or emergency response. These reports will be handled through the Department's normal work process. The application will be used to track citizen requests which were previously received by phone or email thereby replacing the current system of internal emails, sticky notes, or voicemails. Staff will initially test the application, make changes, and realign business processes accordingly. However, throughout the testing phase, staff will continue to receive citizen requests from calls.

The next steps for the mobile citizen reporting tool will be the internal testing phase in which staff within Administrative Services, Operations, and Traffic division of the Public Works Department will receive training and also develop work processes to accept, assign, follow-up, and resolve citizen requests within the citizen reporting tool. Additionally, staff will continue to work on a total City brand, roll out strategy, and technology issues that arise during testing.

Staff has introduced the application to key employees who will be involved during the testing phase. Ongoing evaluations of site functionality, user interface, and usability of the application will continue during the testing period. Following the completion of the testing phase, staff will reevaluate the implementation and recommend moving forward or present modifications. Training and testing is planned to begin in December 2017 with an estimated public rollout in early spring 2018.

At the November 14, 2017 Council Meeting, the staff will present a demonstration of the new tool as currently designed. If successful, the tool can be expanded to accept additional complaint categories.