

Response to Council Question Regarding Purchase of Computers for Library Patrons

There are several key differences between computers acquired for City use versus those intended for home use as sold by discount retailers such as Costco. The City has been buying computers through the Western States Contracting Alliance-National Association of State Procurement Officials (WSCA-NASPO), and receiving government and/or bulk purchase pricing. It is actually very difficult for even deep discounters like Costco to beat the WSCA-NASPO pricing in an apples-to-apples comparison of specific computers. In the case of "All-in-One" systems, the ones offered at Costco are less costly than the ones purchased for the Library, but are not remotely the same in several respects.

The first difference is computers in the City's inventory are commercial grade computers. Costco offers the Dell Inspiron 23-5000 All-In-One computers while those purchased by the City are Dell OptiPlex 9030 computers. Inspiron is a home line, OptiPlex a commercial line intended for workplace use. The commercial line is designed to support heavy use throughout the workday, and has higher quality power supplies and other internal components than the home line. The Inspiron computers have a processor speed of 2.9 GHz versus the OptiPlex speed of 3.2 Ghz. The higher processor speed of the commercial units, coupled with the higher grade components are intended to extend the useful life of City systems. The new OptiPlex systems are also equipped with solid state disk drives to allow faster reboot times and generally crisper performance for Library patrons. Finally, the OptiPlex systems were acquired with four-year maintenance and support service contracts, the Costco Inspiron line comes with one year. Inspiron computers can be acquired from the manufacturer with four-year contracts at extra cost, but it is not clear that option is available in the Costco units.

Assuming Costco's base price, upgrading the service contract at the manufacturer's price, and replacing the standard disk drive with the solid state disk drive, the Inspiron system would cost at least \$1,144, plus tax. The OptiPlex model is \$1,254 plus tax, and that price difference is more than compensated for by commercial grade components and higher processor speed that give them longer useful life and better user level performance.

The Library patron computers are used heavily whenever the Library is open to the public, approximately 66 hours per week. Using a home computer for 10 hours on each weekend day and four hours every week day would be 40 hours, or only about 60 percent of that. It is necessary to provide commercial grade computers to prevent constantly repairing or servicing machines intended for home use.