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ACCOUNTING & AUDIT

How AccuFund Helped a Local Government Keep Serving Citizens

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The ongoing pandemic has greatly affected not only individuals and businesses, but also governments at all levels. For many Americans, their local city government is a bedrock, and their continued interactions and relationship with it can help maintain at least a small sense of normalcy or security even in unsettling times.

Following their state's direction, the city of Picayune, Mississippi declared a local emergency on March 16, 2020, instructing non-essential businesses and workers to work from home when possible. Picayune is a distant suburb of New Orleans. Although the city's administrative staff are considered essential government workers, city clerk Amber Hinton determined that most could work from home. Her office oversees operations of several departments, including financial, payroll, payables, utility billing and IT.

The city has been using the government accounting and management suite from AccuFund (www.AccuFund.com) for more than ten years, but in 2019 switched to the completely cloud-based version of the system. The program includes modules for managing utility billing, property taxes, fees and licenses, permits, inspections, court fines, and grants, along with traditional accounting features such as AR with inventory, purchase orders, work orders, human resources, payroll, fixed assets and travel management. Hinton said the employee self-service functions for HR, payroll and other requests has made those responsibilities much easier.

Hinton who has been with the city's staff for 14 years and has been city clerk for ten, moved to the cloud platform to enable greater mobility and access to financial management and reporting by the city's staff, including by employees who occasionally needed to work from home. She also noted that there was significant IT cost-savings in not having to maintain a server at the city's office.

When the Covid-19 crisis happened, Hinton was able to quickly have most of her staff retrieve their laptops and VOIP headsets from the office, take them home, and resume work, with almost no disruption to customer service. AccuFund also allows them to easily accept online payments from city residents for utilities, including sanitation, water and natural gas service. The city also maintains a drive-up window for residents who wish to continue paying utility bills in person.

“Moving to the cloud version of AccuFund made a huge difference in how quickly we were able to transition to a remote work model, and in our ability to continue offering city services to our residents even during the state of emergency,” Hinton said. “From an employee perspective, using the system at home is no different than using it in the office. They simply log in and have access to the same areas of the program they are authorized to use.”

The city clerk reports to the city manager, mayor and council, and Hinton says she is able to easily create, customize and digitally deliver the reports they need to oversee the city's finances. The system also automates many processes.

When the city first implemented AccuFund, they had the assistance of a local reseller, Mountaineer Computer Systems, Inc., who ensured all data was converted. Since the switch to the cloud system last year, Hinton said they no longer need to worry about updates or other IT issues, since that is all handled automatically by AccuFund.

“AccuFund has helped us continue to serve our citizens while we all get through this difficult time, and has helped our city staff remain a cohesive team,” Hinton said.

“Using the online AccuFund government accounting system made us better prepared to handle this situation.”

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