

Change of Phone Service and Messaging Proposal

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Technical Data as of 2004-03

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I. Proposal

To approve a change of phone service to a Cell phone with Voice mail that provides the ability to leave simultaneous messages and who's cost shall not exceed \$32 a month.

II. Overview

The club's answering machine physically resides in the basement of a long time, occasionally active member, Bill McAllister. It has been located in his basement since somewhere around 1990. In 1995 I replaced the old analog tape based phone with an AT&T model "Answering System 1750". This system is a digital system. It has batteries that must be replaced regularly to prevent the loss of messages during a power loss. In 1996 I placed the machine on an old UPS system formerly used for a PC that I donated to the club for this purpose.

The machine has a total of 20 minutes or recording time, including any announcements we may record. Our announcement takes 1 minute.

Until recently we have had three instances of problems since 1995 our messaging system.

- The house lost power and the backup batteries were not good
- The cat accidentally disconnected the plug from the back of the unit and the batteries were not good
- The machine somehow ended up in a reset state with no messages. We could not account for the reason.

In 2004 we have started to have difficulty with the system in a new way. As you are likely aware, 2004 has seen a record average attendance in the high 80s. With increased numbers of players, the number of people needing to leave messages has also, apparently increased. March of 2004 saw the highest number of messages on the phone with 26 as of 6:15 pm when I had offloaded the messages and sent them out to the TD list with explicit instructions to bring the list with them to the club if they were attending. It is unclear now how many were byes taken at the club and not by phone but the total number of byes for the round was 37 out of our 87 players.

when weather was projected to be very severe. The problem we have encountered on three occasions were people claimed they could not get through to leave a message in time. Most of these people started calling somewhere between 6:30 and 7:00 pm. 7:00 PM is our cut off time for people to leave messages.

This proposal is designed to solve several problems which should result in an overall improvement of our capacity and reliability.

- The ability to leave more than one message at time to allow more people to get through
- Elimination of physical dependencies and logistics of the answering machine

III. Existing System Deficiencies

1. The device physically resides in a private residence. One day we may have to address the issue of moving the phone or service in a hurry.
2. Emergency problems require imposing upon our host for action or access to the machine.
3. Making sure that the batteries and battery backup are in good order and maintained requires imposing on our host to take action on our behalf
4. Setting the time and adjusting for Daylight Savings requires intervention on the part of our host.
5. Only 19 minutes are available for leaving messages. An efficiently left message (call it a short message) containing all the required data might be estimated at 20 seconds. For the sake of estimating, let us assume twice as long for a less efficient message (call it medium). Also assume that 50% are short messages and that there is at least two long messages of a minute each. We can thus project our message capacity at
20 – 1 minute greeting – 2 minutes of long messages leave 17 minutes to be used for short and medium messages (20 seconds and 40 seconds) taken at 50%. This means that each of those 17 minutes will contain two messages. Thus we have 2 Long + 17 efficient + 17 Long = 36 messages.

If half our average attendance of 88 (through 2004-11) called in for a bye, we stand a reasonable chance of not getting all the messages.
6. Only one message at a time can be left on the machine. The closer to the deadline for leaving a message, the more messages that are left on the machine. The majority of messages are left between 5:00 and 7:00 PM with most occurring in the last half hour.

IV. Possible Solutions

A. Have the machine relocated to the Senior Center

This solution is not considered very deeply by this proposal. There are a number of issues that would require being addressed that are currently not an issue where we are, namely:

1. Location of the answering machine in the Senior Center. Space is at a premium and the phone connections are located in the main office area without much flexibility for accommodating change.
2. Securing the machine from being disconnected or physically accessed between Tuesdays
3. Having a phone line with service added to the Senior Center. Unclear how difficult this may be. Will likely incur one time charges.
4. Does not solve the multi-messaging capability problems. To do this another machine with such capability would need to be identified and purchased. Standard consumer models are not likely to have such capability available though no research has been done to verify this.

B. Transfer the Clubs phone number to a Cell Phone with appropriate options.

1. Pro's

- a) Allows us to restrict people in attendance at the club from using the Senior Center phone. Currently we highly discourage it. We have had on occasion in the past a number of incidences where the phone was being used. No significant abuse but calls to peoples home state (NH and RI) raised red flags when the phone use was audited by the Town. Remember, the Senior Center is a Town facility. With our own cell phone, we can allow people to use the club phone for calls if necessary. Note, there are some youth at the club who do not have their own cell phone so they request the use of the phone to arrange their ride home.
- b) The only physical item to maintain is the club phone, if we choose to even keep it charged.
- c) Messaging / Cell service provided by Verizon is very close to the current phone service of **\$26.15** a month for the physical line to the existing machine. It should be noted that we pay this price because we have a Business listing to allow us to appear in the Yellow Pages. Up until this most recent research, a Business listing required a physical location for a phone.
- d) Features as of March 2004 of this year
 - Verizon Customer Service: 1-800-870-9999
 - Verizon Cell phones pricing: 1-800-922-0202
 - (1) Remote Call Forwarding for \$16.97 a month. This is 1/2 of the features we need
 - (2) Voice Mail \$10 a month - This is where we forward calls to.
 - (3) Holds up to 40 messages. That is the max and no way around it.
 - (4) Up to **Six** calls messages can be left at the same time.
 - (5) We have the option, should we decide to, to have the phone ring at the club in the event we suspect there was a problem with the answering machine.

2. Cons

- (1) \$42 one time set up charge

3. Unknowns

- (1) No data on reliability was available from the representative
- (2) No data obtained about greetings, such as how long or if switch able to allow us to have multiple greetings ready to go for different circumstances.

4. Status Quo

- (1) If the number of messages approaches the limit of 40 we would have to be on top of this fact and do an offload of messages.

V. Related Topic – Change in Phone number

If we are to change our service, it seems to be an appropriate time to discuss the possibility of getting a new and easier number.

We would have to plan a transition, perhaps leaving the existing service for several months as a safety net or perhaps with call forwarding to the new number with a reminder for several months on the new messaging system.

There is no extra charge for custom or repeating digit numbers and was told that there were still plenty of “nice” numbers available, such as -5800 or - 8888

There is a web site that lets you make names out of phone numbers if you want to try and get a number that can be remembered via spelling. Having a number that spells to something that might be easy to remember is an alternative to all repeating digits but some people may find it more difficult to dial via spelling than to remember an “easy” number. Our current number has as its best spelling to date: Put-Dog1

To try out spelling, go to <http://www.phonespell.org/>

End of proposal