

Building a New Police Records Division: Vancouver, WA Police Department

Like many police departments, the one in Vancouver, Washington contracted with the local sheriff's office to handle its records management operations. The sheriff's office had provided records management services for over 20 years. As the city grew and the department's needs evolved, the agency determined it was in its best interest to develop its own police records division. Due to the contract terms with the sheriff's office coming to an end, this new division had to be up and running within six months.

Requiring 24/7 services, new offices, a new workforce, IT resources, fiscal oversight, training, and systems implementation, the City was faced with a daunting task, including a formal needs assessment to measure just exactly what will be needed in each of these areas, and someone to manage it all. The Vancouver Police Department turned to PRI.

Assistant Chief Chris Sutter contacted PRI, reaching company president Ed Claughton via telephone one afternoon. After discussing the project Ed asked, "... so when do you need this done by?" "Six months", said Chief Sutter, "with additional assistance needed thereafter".

Despite being a risky endeavor, PRI agreed to take on the project.

A Formidable Project

The Vancouver Police Department had 278 employees but no records personnel, a shared records management system hosted by the Portland Police Bureau, a CAD system and communications center managed by a regional dispatch center, and no internal expertise in records management, UCR, or public records. There was no policy, office space nor any kind of guide for Vancouver to turn to.



Vancouver Records Inventory

PRI knew exactly what had to be done.

Upon developing a formal project management team, project plan, project management site, and team collaboration tools, PRI scheduled and facilitated bi-weekly meetings with numerous police, IT, HR, facilities, public works and finance representatives. The team's mandate was clear: within one year, the police department must have new workspace built out, IT systems and resources in place, new staff, policy, training, and funding to provide for 24/7 records management operations for this city of 175,000 residents.

This new division must be technically integrated with regional and state databases and be able to process numerous types of records and data.



City of Vancouver Records Facilities



Having PRI on our team was crucial to the success of our start-up. There were countless times they brought up an item for review that wasn't on our radar and needed to be considered. Having their expertise and outside perspective helped us avoid many roadblocks."

— Katrina West, Records Manager

It will process incident reports, arrests, accidents, citations, supplements, warrants, protection orders, and service the public with concealed pistol licensing, background checks, and public records requests. Computers, office furniture, telephony, and security all had to be purchased and ready to go.

PRI proceeded with a comprehensive needs assessment including a staffing study, business process analysis and technology inventory. Our risk assessment identified human resources as risk #1. The operation would require hiring 23 people within six months.

To overcome this major risk factor, our consultants implemented a human resource enablement plan and assisted the City of Vancouver with the employment and onboarding of new records staff. PRI drafted job descriptions, job announcements and interview questions, recruited applicants, assisted with applicant interviews, and developed a training program. Within a matter of six months, a new workforce consisting of a Records Manager, Records Supervisors and over twenty personnel were hired, trained, and able to launch a new 24-hour operation.

A Complete Success

On-time and on-budget, the new records division successfully launched January 1st, 2017. As time progressed however, the large-scale consortium of over

50 law enforcement agencies throughout Oregon and Washington, known as RegJIN (Regional Justice Information Network) which shared the Versadex RMS began to break apart. This system was hosted by the Portland Police Bureau and many of the partner agencies expressed dissatisfaction with the software and the vendor's responsiveness to their concerns. Several news articles were published on the matter and the ongoing technical failures of the system led the Vancouver Police Department to explore replacing the system. They once again turned to PRI.

"Impressive" Financial Analysis

Faced with yet another challenge involving a potential system replacement, the department sought to first thoroughly assess options and the long-range costs related to keeping the current system versus replacing it.

Due to its deep industry expertise, PRI was engaged to assess the current RMS marketplace and developed an economic analysis worksheet detailing 5-year costs for maintaining the current system and for replacing it. PRI developed a full-scope project budget entailing costs for each element of purchasing and supporting both a cloud system and an on-premise system, outlining the pros and cons of each.

The financial analysis entailed determining the costs of all hardware including necessary replacement of servers, workstations, back-up systems, scanners, routers, switches and barcode scanners for property and evidence operations. Costs were also calculated for software, licensing, interfaces, support, and for staff salaries and benefits related to personnel assigned to maintain the system.

To provide the client and Vancouver's elected officials all the information needed to make an informed decision, PRI gathered workload metrics, historical documentation of system issues, conducted interviews, and developed a comprehensive gap analysis report detailing best-fit options based on the current environment.



PRI and Vancouver Project Team Meeting



New Vancouver Police Records Management Division Facilities

The assessment and resulting financial picture revealed it was not only cost effective to replace the current high-cost Versaterm system, but also revealed a cumulative 5-year savings of over \$2 million by selecting a cloud system.

Executives from the City's Finance office conveyed they were "quite impressed" by the financial analysis completed by PRI. As a result of our work, the City authorized the formal separation from RegJIN and the work required for the police department to begin the process of seeking a new RMS. Once again, they turned to PRI.

System Replacement

The police department's trust with PRI had been well established. The partnership had been solidified and the successful completion of the challenging work thus far led to another city-approved contract for consulting services. PRI proceeded to develop functional and technical system specifications for a new system and drafted an RFP, vendor rating criteria and scoring matrices, opting to leave the door open for vendors to bid for either an on-premise or cloud-based solution.

Upon issuance of the RFP and assisting the police department with managing the selection process, PRI coordinated onsite vendor demonstrations, site visits, vendor client surveys, and a hands-on lab for system users to test bidding vendor's systems.

Upon completion of the rigorous selection process and development of a shortlist, Vancouver Police selected Mark43 for its system's ease of use and forward-looking technology, and opted to have PRI assist with system implementation and project management.

Records Archive Project

In 2017, after the new records division went live, the City sold a parcel of land on which sat the City's records warehouse. The warehouse stored all of the city's archival records, including those from the police department, dating back to the early 1990's. These records encompassed 848 boxes and over 850,000 microfilm images, each of which contained police case files requiring inventory and review to determine whether they required scanning and retention or purging. Due to the looming sale of the property, the city required the expedient resolution of these records and lacked the staff needed to conduct this laborious work, turning yet again to PRI.

To determine resource requirements by calculating the number of hours expected to index each box, research each case, scan and purge the records, it was determined the effort required 14,283 hours of labor and 11 personnel working full-time to complete the work within the required timeframe.

PRI provided a full-time onsite Project Manager who assisted with engaging temporary staffing services, configured a "war room" outfitted with workstations, scanners and a full complement of staff, utilizing the city's new document imaging program. The records were successfully imaged and purged according to Washington State Archives regulations, and the sale of the building occurred as scheduled.

The City of Vancouver awarded PRI three separate contracts and engaged our services over the course of three years. Each was a complete success.