

VILLAGE OF HOMEWOOD



BOARD AGENDA MEMORANDUM

DATE OF MEETING: July 14, 2026

To: Village President and Board of Trustees

Through: Napoleon Haney, Village Manager

From: Terence Acquah, Assistant Village Manager

Topic: Village Website Redesign Initiative

PURPOSE

Staff recommends that the Village Board approve a four-year agreement with CivicPlus of Manhattan, KS, for the Village's new website. The agreement includes a one-time implementation fee of \$45,000, followed by annual maintenance and hosting fees of \$23,000 for the remaining three (3) years, with a 3% annual increase per year (negotiated down from 5%).

Approval of this agreement will ensure the Village's website complies with new requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), enhances accessibility for all users, and provides a modern, user-friendly platform that supports the Village's expanded communication and community engagement efforts.

PROCESS

Current Website

Since 2017, the Village has utilized Granicus, LLC of Denver, CO, as its Content Management System (CMS) to power the Village's website. At the time of implementation, Granicus was considered a leading platform among peer communities, allowing the Village to develop a website that effectively served both residents and staff. Over the past nine years, the website has undergone several redesigns to keep it modern, engaging, and responsive to the community's needs.

One of the primary advantages of Granicus has been its affordability. For the past several years, the Village has operated under an annual agreement at a cost of \$10,603. However, as the Village's communication and engagement efforts have evolved, staff has experienced increasing challenges with the platform. Granicus' CMS has proven to be inflexible, with even minor website modifications often requiring additional fees. Additionally, the platform's technology has not kept pace with modern website standards, lacking features such as integrated video capabilities that are now commonplace on municipal websites. Staff has also experienced ongoing concerns with customer service and overall responsiveness.

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With the Village currently operating on a year-to-year agreement, and in light of new federal accessibility requirements under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), staff determined it was an appropriate time to evaluate other website platforms. The goal was to identify a solution that would not only ensure ADA compliance but also provide a more modern, user-friendly, and fully integrated website that reflects the Village's commitment to communication, community engagement, and accessibility for all users.

ADA Federal requirements

The federal government has adopted new Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements that apply to municipal websites and mobile applications. These requirements are intended to ensure that residents with disabilities can easily access online information and services, such as agendas, meeting packets, permit applications, forms, and other public documents.

To meet these requirements, the Village will need to ensure that its website and digital content are accessible to individuals using screen readers and other assistive technologies. This includes making PDF documents accessible, providing descriptions for images, ensuring videos include captions, and improving website navigation for users with disabilities.

Because the Village of Homewood serves a population of fewer than 50,000 residents, the Village must be in compliance with the new requirements by April 26, 2028.

Selection Process

Originally, the Village met with Granicus to discuss its frustrations with the current website and determine whether the desired improvements could be implemented within the existing platform. During those discussions, Granicus informed the Village that, due to new ADA accessibility requirements affecting municipalities nationwide, its current CMS platform would be retired and replaced with a new ADA-compliant platform that included many of the features the Village was seeking.

While the new platform addressed the Village's needs, it also came with a significant increase in cost compared to the Village's current annual agreement. As a result, staff determined it was prudent to evaluate other content management system providers to ensure the selected platform would align with the Village's budget, long-term goals, and growing communication needs. Staff ultimately solicited proposals from three municipal website providers: Granicus, CivicPlus, and Revize of Troy, MI.

A core leadership team was established early in the process to guide decision-making, maintain project momentum and ensure organizational alignment throughout the redesign effort. This small, focused approach is intended to reduce inefficiencies while still incorporating feedback from all Village departments.

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The Village distributed an internal survey to staff (165 participants) across departments to better understand existing pain points, workflow challenges, and opportunities for improvement. The survey focused heavily on user experience, content accessibility, resident service needs, and internal content management concerns.

Initial feedback from 10 survey responses identified several recurring themes, including:

- Difficulty locating frequently requested information
- Utilizing forms in an effective way that could also accept online payments
- Opportunities to improve mobile usability
- The need for a dedicated “downtown Homewood” satellite site
- Improved organization of departmental resources and information for residences
- Greater consistency in design, branding and messaging

Vendor Evaluation

Once the staff survey was completed, the internal project team conducted website demonstrations with all three (3) vendors, with the goal of narrowing the field to two finalists for formal presentations to a broader group of Village staff. Granicus was eliminated during the initial round due to its significantly higher cost and staff's experience with the current platform. CivicPlus and Revize advanced to the final round, where they were evaluated using the following criteria:

- ADA-compliance capabilities
- Easier workflow of forms and payment processing
- User experience and navigation structure
- Content management system flexibility
- Emergency alert integration
- Mobile responsiveness
- Long-term scalability
- Ease of use for staff contributors
- Customer support and training resources

The Village convened an internal stakeholder meeting that included representatives from Finance, Economic and Community Development, Fire and Building, Police, Community Events, Manager’s Office, and Public Works. During the meeting, the two preferred vendors, Revize and CivicPlus, each delivered a formal 45-minute presentation. These presentations provided attendees with a guided tour of each platform’s capabilities and functionality, while also allowing staff the opportunity to ask questions and evaluate how each solution would meet the Village’s needs.

The internal stakeholder meeting provided staff with a firsthand look at each website platform, allowing participants to evaluate the functionality, design, and overall capabilities offered by

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each vendor. Following the presentations, staff completed an evaluation matrix that assessed each platform across five categories: overall design, functionality, training and support, additional features, and user experience. Each category was scored on a scale of one to five, with five representing the highest rating.

The rankings were as follows:

A ▼	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M
Staff Member	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	
Revize												
Overall Design	3	5	4	4	3	4	3	3	3	5	3	
Functionality	3	5	4	4	3	3	3	3	3	5	4	
Support Training	2	5	3	4	4	4	4	3	3	3	4	
Extra Features	4	5	3	4	3	3	2	3	3	5	3	
UX	4	4	3	4	4	4	2	3	3	5	3	
Total:	16	24	17	20	17	21	15	15	15	23	20	203
Civic Plus												
Overall Design	5	5	4.5	5	4	5	5	4	4	2	5	
Functionality	5	4	4.5	5	4	4	5	4	4	3	4	
Support Training	5	5	4	5	5	5	5	4	4	3	4	
Extra Features	5	4	4	5	2	5	3	4	4	2	4	
UX	5	5	4.5	5	4	5	5	4	4	2	5	
Total:	25	23	21.5	25	20	24	23	20	20	12	22	235.5

Based on staff's evaluation of the various vendors, staff recommends CivicPlus as the desired CMS moving forward. Staff felt that CivicPlus provided the best user experience (UX) and technology to match the Village's engagement efforts. This was also reinforced by the competitive pricing provided by them.

About CivicPlus

Founded in 1998, CivicPlus is a government-focused technology company specializing in digital solutions for local municipalities, with an emphasis on operational efficiency, resident engagement, and ADA-compliant accessibility. Serving more than 13,000 government clients and over 340 million resident users nationwide, CivicPlus has built a reputation for providing scalable, integrated platforms that modernize municipal services through website management, process automation, resident communication tools, and accessibility solutions.

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Next steps

The goal is to launch a fully redesigned, modern, and future-ready Village website within approximately one year, which is the typical implementation timeline for a project of this scope. Throughout the process, the Village will remain committed to transparency, accessibility, usability, and delivering a digital experience that reflects the high level of service residents have come to expect from the Homewood community.

Following execution of the agreement with CivicPlus, staff will begin a comprehensive audit of the existing website to ensure all content is accurate, current, and relevant. This effort will include regular meetings with each department to review webpages, update outdated information, remove unnecessary content, and identify opportunities to improve the overall user experience.

The website redesign is anticipated to be a winter-long project. Throughout implementation, the current Village website will remain fully operational and will not be impacted by the transition. The Village's existing agreement with Granicus expires in February 2027, allowing staff sufficient time to complete the redesign, test the new platform, and ensure a seamless transition before the current contract concludes.

OUTCOME

A municipal website design, website redevelopment, hosting, branding, content management system implementation, or related consulting services is characterized as a professional or technical service contract, not a public works project. As a result, a non-home rule municipality does not need to waive competitive bidding under 65 ILCS 5/8-9-1.

Refreshing the Village's website and transitioning to CivicPlus is an important investment in improving how residents, businesses, and visitors interact with the Village. The new platform will provide a more modern, ADA-compliant, and mobile-friendly experience while making it easier for users to find information, access services, and engage with Village government. It will also give staff more flexibility to update content quickly, reduce reliance on outside vendors for routine changes, and ensure the website continues to meet the community's evolving needs for years to come.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

- **Funding Source:** General Obligation Non-Referendum Bond Funds for implementation and General Fund for ongoing maintenance & hosting fees
- **Budgeted Amount:** \$50,000 for implementation
- **Total Project Implementation Cost:** \$45,000
- **Total Annual Maintenance & Hosting Fee:** \$23,000 for three years, with a 3% annual increase

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LEGAL REVIEW

Not Required

RECOMMENDED BOARD ACTION

Authorize the Village President to enter into a four-year agreement with CivicPlus of Manhattan, KS, to develop the Village's new website. The agreement includes a one-time implementation fee of \$45,000, followed by annual maintenance and hosting fees of \$23,000 for the remaining three years, with a 3% annual increase.

ATTACHMENT(S)

- Proposal
- Vendor Review