
City of Rollingwood- City Council Message Board

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Objective: At the July City Council Meeting the City Council directed staff to add a City Council Message Board to the city website. Per the Public Information Act-

Section 551.006 authorizes members of a governmental body to communicate through an online message board or similar Internet application. 185 A governmental body utilizing an electronic message board may have only one such board and it can be used by only members of the governmental body and their authorized staff. 186 The online message board must be prominently displayed on the governmental body's primary Internet web page and no more than one click away from that page. 187 A governmental body that removes a communication from the online message board that has been posted for at least 30 days must maintain the posting for a period of six years, and the communication is public information under the Public Information Act.

Diggio Research: There are four major components of this project-

1. The first component of the message board is the software tool itself.
2. This tool will need to be hosted on a server. There are message board services that offer cloud hosting with the message board service itself and services that can be self-hosted on a server of the City's choice.
3. This message board server and service must be integrated into the City's website.
4. The message board must be customized for the City of Rollingwood: logos, appearance, users added, etc.

Message Board Options

1) Recommended Product: XenForo Cloud- \$60/month or \$648/annual

XenForo Software + XenForo Hosting

- 400K monthly page views
- 50GB data storage
- Lifetime support & fully managed service
- Unlimited members and staff
- Daily back-ups
- SSL Security

Ashley: "I've actually spoken to the people at San Marcos and they use XenForo and like it. San Marcos: <https://councilforum.sanmarcostx.gov/index.php>"

Diggio: The most economical and easy to implement option would be to utilize XenForo with their hosting services. There is still some customization of the message board that is required, but XenForo has support to help with this process.

2) Alternate Product: Discourse Business- \$300/month

Discourse Software + Hosting

- 500K monthly page views
- 100 GB storage
- Priority email support & dedicated email support
- Unlimited members and up to 15 admins/moderators
- SSL Security

Diggio: More costly than XenForo for some added features. We are concerned about the limit of the number of admins. This product looks like it is more than the City would need.

3) Alternate Hosting Site

Diggio looked into hosting on a Diggio server and on a cloud service (Azure) for self-hosting either of these products. Ultimately it was more costly set up and maintain monthly and did not include the same level of support from either XenForo or Discourse.

4) Alternate Services

a) Alternate Product: PHPBB

This tool is used by the Austin City Council (<https://austincouncilforum.org/>).

They do not offer hosting so we would need to source an alternate hosting site or host on Diggio server which would also involve higher setup costs. The support does not look as robust as either XenForo or Discourse.

b) Alternate Product: Civic Plus

This tool is used by the Castroville City Council (<https://castrovilletx.gov/CommunityVoice>).

We have called into Civic Plus, but have not determined if they offer this tool or if this is an embedded tool. MuniCode/Civic Plus is responsible for the City's website, so the City will need to work with MuniCode no matter what tool is implemented.