

Chebucto Community Net

Report from the Technical Committee

April 2018

Summary

The past year has been technically challenging. We have continued working to move all our services (email, wireless login and authentication, webhosting, databases, DNS, and more) to new machines. This requires a serious amount of volunteer time. While some services have now been moved, others are still being hosted on the legacy systems.

New equipment has been installed in each of the manors to ensure that access point service resumes automatically after a power interruption.

We need more technical volunteers.

Details

Equipment

Our current operation still runs mainly on legacy software and machines. These machines must be, and will be, replaced. They suffer from physical aging (breakage of components) and pose security challenges. Modern software must replace the out-of-date applications.

Due to a series of breakdowns in some of our older machines, many of our available volunteer hours have had to be invested in patching up our old equipment in order to maintain service to our members. We have succeeded in some measure, but many of you will have noticed the connectivity and service interruption problems, some of which plague us still.

We are having issues of sudden loss of internet connectivity whose cause is still unknown. It may reside in our system, or may be from further up the line (our service providers). We are actively investigating.

Note: A recent major power outage at the Chase building (where our dozen or so machines reside) caused one very important machine to irrecoverably break down as it attempted to restart when power came back on. The services provided by that machine had to be re-created on a different machine, a major task.

Wireless Service

In order to improve service and connectivity in the manors, our manor installations have been augmented with UPS (Uninterruptible Power Supply) units on the Point-to-Point links, as well as auto-rebooters to bring the connections back up after a power interruption, voltage drop or random failure.

This winter we completed the installation of wifi access points and supporting hardware in Sunrise Manor, and brought Sunrise Manor online in February.

Dialup Service

Compared to the early years (1990's), we now only have a very small group of Chebucto dial-up users. We accordingly reduced our leased dialup phone lines by half, as they are a significant expense. This reduction has created problems with busy signals or inability to connect, probably due to a configuration issue either from the Eastlink end or from our end. The problem is under investigation.

The Future

CSuite3 and new Servers

The new system we are working on is faster, has much more disk space, and will have much improved software. The system will be set up to have security patches installed automatically, and will have monitoring software to alert the technical team of problems.

We will be able to monitor and control the servers from off-site, which abolishes the need for a technical volunteer to physically travel to the building for every single problem in the system.

A new content management system (CSuite3) will replace the legacy software collection we currently use. Account creation, Chebucto website updating, financial record keeping, report generation, and other tasks will become straightforward and uncomplicated.

Wireless

This summer we are hoping to bring Ahern Manor online with Chebucto Wireless. The equipment has been purchased. Volunteer time is the limiting factor.

Dialup

We are looking into what the future for dialup service can be. Can it be more than a niche or legacy service? Public input would be welcome.

Volunteers

Chebucto Community Net needs more volunteers. We need volunteers willing to serve on the Board of Directors: these are the folks who represent our members. We also need technically inclined volunteers to serve on the Chebucto Technical Committee; some on-the-job training is available.