



COUNTY OF SAN MATEO
Inter-Departmental Correspondence
County Manager



Date: August 7, 2012
Board Meeting Date: August 28, 2012
Special Notice / Hearing: None
Vote Required: Majority

To: Honorable Board of Supervisors
From: John L. Maltbie, County Manager
Subject: County Office Furniture Standard

RECOMMENDATION:

Adopt a Resolution that repeals the establishment of Pleion Lineal office furniture systems as the standard for County furnishings.

BACKGROUND:

On October 19, 1999, the Board adopted Resolution #63133 establishing Pleion Lineal office furniture systems as the standard for County furnishings. The resolution also waived the bidding process and allowed the County to enter into a direct buying agreement with the Pleion Corporation. The justification for waiving competitive bidding was that purchasing directly from the manufacturer would give the County the best available price.

The County never signed a buying agreement with the Pleion Corporation. Instead, an Invitation to Bid was issued in May of 2000 for space planning and purchase and installation of Pleion. Corporate Environments was selected as the lowest responsible bidder and entered into a vendor agreement in June of 2000. Since then, Corporate Environments, which is now called Poletti and Associates, has been the sole provider of space planning, furniture components and furniture installation for the County.

The Pleion Corporation filed for bankruptcy in 2006 and no longer exists. In 2009, MSI Office Furniture, a firm that resells used furniture, bought the manufacturing name equipment and the right to produce Pleion. According to a company spokesperson, legal issues over the intellectual property rights delayed the start of Pleion production, but the firm plans to "ramp Pleion back up".

In the early 1990's, the County adopted ergonomic standards. When selected as the furniture standard for the County, Pleion complied with those standards which specified

30" high keyboard platforms and computer keyboard cutouts in work surfaces. When the standards were adopted, computers had large monitors and bulky computer processing units (CPUs) which required corner work areas.

In the twelve years since Pleion was selected and the over 20 years since County ergonomic standards were adopted, computers and ergonomic tools have changed significantly. We now have flat screens that can be mounted on monitor arms. Large corner computer areas are no longer necessary and adjustable height work surfaces – also known as sit/stand workstations - are now recommended as are computer keyboards that have “mouse island” attachments. All these new tools are currently being reviewed by Risk Management as they are currently updating the County ergonomic standards.

In addition to the ergonomic benefits of these new tools, workstations with monitor arms and height adjustable surfaces can be easily modified to fit any worker with the touch of a button or movement of the monitor arm. These flexible, “one-size fits all” work stations facilitate “box moves” which are much less costly than reconfiguring workstations every time a new employee is assigned to a new work space.

DISCUSSION:

The only aspect of the 1999 resolution ever implemented was establishing Pleion as the County furniture standard. The County never signed a direct buying agreement with the Pleion Corporation. .

While the County will continue to use Pleion in many of our offices and will maintain a limited supply of product, changes in ergonomic best practices, implementation of the space standards that increase work space density, the need to competitively bid furniture purchases and the uncertainty about the current and future availability of Pleion are all reasons to repeal the resolution establishing Pleion as the County standard. Any future furniture purchases will comply with the updated ergonomic standards.

The resolution has been reviewed and approved as to form by County Counsel.

This action promotes the County's vision of a prosperous community by providing office space for businesses to expand in San Mateo County and generating revenue for the County General Fund.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no direct fiscal impact associated with repealing the resolution that established Pleion as the office standard. Competitively bidding office furniture purchases, space planning and system installation could save money. Finally, all furniture purchases will be either included in Department budgets or in appropriation transfer requests for large projects such as Circle Star.