A+ Technology Supports Bridgeport, Connecticut

From Its Beaches to Its 40 City-Wide Schools, Bridgeport Joins the Ranks of Secured Cities

Traveling to Pleasure Beach Via Ferry

Getting the A+ crew, their van and equipment to and from Pleasure Beach each day was one of the most challenging obstacles faced. If left on the island at low tide, they would be stranded.

Overview:

When Bill Finch, Mayor of the City of Bridgeport, Connecticut, acted on his mayoral promise to bring back access and re-open the historic Pleasure Beach, he set much more in motion than merely making the beach accessible again to locals and tourists. His pledge to restore public access to Pleasure Beach - the 71-acre peninsula that, back in its hay day, was a huge attraction and vacation spot complete with seaside cottages, a carousel, amusement park and a shimmering seashore - also came with a commitment to make it safe and secure. This beautiful piece of property had laid dormant since 1996, when vandals burned the wooden bridge leading from Seaview Avenue in the city's East end out to the western tip of the peninsula. Once a gateway to paradise, the desolate beach, over the years, came to resemble more a Paradise lost.

A lot has changed in our world since '96, not the least of which is the need for heightened security. Because of its vantage point and close proximity to many high-target security sites, Homeland Security took a special interest in the effort to secure the port. Just to the East of Pleasure Beach is Sikorsky Memorial Airport. Large fuel oil storage facilities with a tanker depot are located to the north of it, and a power plant sits just to the west of the harbor itself. Also in close proximity are the ferry terminal and a rail station. With so many sensitive sites all around it, Pleasure Beach is a critical location in need of some serious security coverage. An effective video surveillance system needed to be put in place.

As a result, the City of Bridgeport was awarded a grant by The Department of Homeland Security to secure the port. They soon put to work the services of A+ Technology & Security, a leading integration services provider based in Bay Shore, NY, to secure its city and safeguard Pleasure Beach, and other key facilities within its city limits, including all of its city schools.

The project got underway in April, 2014, in advance of the official beach re-opening in June. James Adikes, Senior Project Manager at A+, together with A+ Account Executive Michelle Cimetta, are overseeing the effort which has involved the integration of several key technologies.

"Pleasure Beach has sat idle for many years, and Mayor Finch saw a need to reopen it and again utilize this beautiful piece of property," Adikes says. "The concern was that it was abandoned for almost 20 years, and the City needed to secure the island. But there was no infrastructure in place out there, and because it is a recreational park and preserve containing several delicate species and plants, environmentalists were not in favor of trenching and running fiber. In response to that environmental issue, we proposed a solar and wireless mesh solution to allow for security cameras and thermal cameras.

Protecting Pleasure Beach Collaboratively, Despite the Challenges:

The City requested the wireless mesh solutions of Firetide. They met with Adikes for an onsite walk through to provide a design concept which he developed and implemented, based on Firetide's input. He placed their antennas over the entire port to allow the connection of multiple link nodes throughout the perimeter. This provided the infrastructure needed to support the use the 25 high resolution Axis cameras on Pleasure Beach.

Of the 25 cameras positioned on the peninsula, four are powered by solar arrays, and two are thermal, high end AXIS Q1921-E cameras which look at the mouth of the harbor and cover a range of one mile for a thermal impression. The other Axis thermal camera is placed on the east side of the island to cover the waterways at the foot of the Sikorsky Airport runways.

Axis cameras being used in this deployment also include the P3367-VE cameras and P3384-VE (WDR) wide dynamic range cameras which get the job done very well in low light conditions. As Adikes points out, Pleasure Beach is a peninsula that connects directly to Stratford, so people can walk out there, making it vulnerable to vandalism. There is also wildlife present - foxes and some deer, as well as tiny piping plover and osprey, as well, that have a nest there that the City also wished to be protected from disturbance.

In addition to the Firetide wireless solution to support the beach-wide cameras, Adikes installed Alcatel switches to power the cameras between the two pavilions on Pleasure Beach. Because the city already had a fiber backbone running between the two pavilions - one a food service and picnic area, the other a rest room and shower facility - he didn't have to rely on a wireless mesh solution there. There is a pole 75 feet away from the pavilion, so the Firetide technology would've been overkill in that location. Adikes instead used an EnGenius wireless bridge to provide a link there.

CaseStudy:

"The City of Bridgeport put its trust in A+ Technology & Security, and they did not disappoint. James Adikes, Michelle Cimetta, and David Antar, together with their entire team and technology partners, have set a new standard of security for the City of Bridgeport."

Jorge Garcia, Director of Facilities for the City of Bridgeport, CT

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Pulling It All Together:

Adikes and Cimetta worked with several decision-makers from the City throughout the project, including Jorge Garcia, Director of Facilities. "Jorge has been the point person, the bus driver so to speak, pulling everyone together as needed," Cimetta says. "Other key players from the City involved on the project are Scott Appleby, Office of Emergency Management (OEM), Paul Grech from the Bridgeport Police Department, as well as staff from the Department of Parks & Recreation, Board of Education, and the Harbor Master.

To maintain consistency with Bridgeport VMS systems already in place, the Pleasure Beach surveillance video is now being recorded using Milestone's XProtect Enterprise VMS Software, which will ultimately be one of many solutions tied together into an integrated command center environment using C3fusion software from IPVideo Corporation. The Office of Emergency Management (OEM) is in charge of monitoring Pleasure Beach.

This network infrastructure now in place will also allow the City of Bridgeport to secure more than just Pleasure Beach. The second phase of the project:

Securing Bridgeport's Schools:

There are 40 schools within the City of Bridgeport, and A+ Technology & Security is in the process of heightening security at each and every one of them.

Three schools have been completed and serve as the test program on the design and implementation before proceeding with the remaining schools. Adikes reports, "The City is thrilled with what we're doing and the high quality cameras we've recommended. They have established our recommendations as their new standard in terms of resolution and specific models." He adds, "The cameras are providing the schools much more asset protection than they had before. There is fencing around the schools, but the cameras are a very strong deterrent and will provide evidence, if needed, in the event of any incidents."

Setting up Solar Panels at Pleasure Beach.

The three schools completed have been equipped with 20 Axis cameras each. The Axis P3346-VE(3Mp) and Axis P3367-VE(5Mp) series are the outdoor cameras being used, and Axis P3364-V (1.3Mp) cameras are being used on the interior. Video is viewed, managed and recorded using SentryVMS Edge NVRs, located at each school. SentryVMS provides administrators with an easy-to-use interface, the ability to securely access the system locally or remotely, including via mobile devices, and highly reliable recording and storage. It also easily integrates with several other technologies being integrated into the school's security system.

Several other technologies are being integrated into the schools' security systems. Isonas IP-based prox card readers are replacing the older mag locks that didn't always function correctly on the doors. Sisco's Fast-Pass Visitor Management system has been installed for secure yet convenient access control for visitors. And, Totus lighting with built-in Axis 360 degree IP based camera have been programmed and put in at a vital courtyard and various entrances at the Dunbar Elementary Magna school. Adikes explains that one of the "Active Deterrent" lighting placements is positioned over a loading dock at the school where there is public access.

A+ Technology will be upgrading the remaining 37 City schools to this new standard set at the three test schools.

The Bridgeport School District has a full time staff of security personnel that is managed by the Police Department. They are in charge of monitoring the video footage from the schools in an office at the facilities where their command center is right now.

Cimetta, together with David Antar, IPVideo Corporation President, are in the process of quoting the City a centralized "Security Operations Center" (SOC) Command Center that will rely on C3fusion to pull everything together in one location. C3fusion, IPVideo Corporation's Physical Security Information Management (PSIM) solution, is command center software that integrates disparate security sub-systems into a Common Operating Picture (COP), and then filters and prioritizes the data to enable security personnel to make informed decisions with complete situational awareness. C3fusion provides an operator with the ability to take control of a security event, efficiently resolve the incident and then automatically archive the incident in a common database for later review or forensic analysis. These processes are handled through the use of CaseMaker and CaseExplorer, two applications embedded within C3fusion that provide user-friendly, step-by-step guidance in managing, documenting and storing complex, multi-tiered security events and bundling them into comprehensive "cases" for future searchable access and forensic use.

A Bird's Eye View:

Another component of this City of Bridgeport project has been the installation of a surveillance system in Seaside Park. In one of the park's baseball fields, there is an osprey nest perched on one of the stadium light poles. Adikes proposed an AXIS Q1765-LE Network Camera, which is a slim, bullet-style outdoor-ready network camera with 18x optical zoom and auto-focus. It delivers HDTV 1080p video in multiple, individually configurable H.264 and Motion JPEG video streams. The built-in IR illumination is provided by four auto adjusting LEDs. He selected it because of its ability to zoom into the nest from a distance so the birds would not be disturbed. He is using a cellular modem which allows people to dial into the camera via the City's environmental website to view the baby birds.

Overcoming Obstacles:

Ironically, despite the vast size and scope of this project and the technical solutions needed to meet the needs of the City of Bridgeport, Adikes reports that the logistics of travelling to and from Pleasure Beach are what proved to be one of the most challenging obstacles he faced! When he and his team arrived each day, the Harbor Master would have to provide a landing vessel ramp to drive the A+ van on and off as there is no road accessibility to Pleasure Beach. Once on the water vessel, the van and crew were transported to the Pleasure Beach peninsula, a 40 minute ride, before they could begin work. But, because of the dependency on the tide schedule, they'd have a short window to get on and off the island by mid-tide each day. The boat rides back and forth were often interesting, and Adikes recalls they needed to turn around once because they were taking on water over the bow!

Customer Satisfaction:

But, aside from a little rocking of the boat, the project has moved along very smoothly and very much to the City of Bridgeport's satisfaction. When Pleasure Beach officially re-opened earlier this summer with new security measures already underway, Jorge Garcia, director of facilities for the City of Bridgeport, said publically, "Here in Bridgeport, this is a landmark. It's part of our history. It's part of our DNA. To be part of the team to make this happen is a great experience. It's like a little piece of Nantucket right here in the Park City."

Regarding the overall project, Garcia has this to say. "The City of Bridgeport put its trust in A+ Technology & Security, and they did not disappoint. James Adikes, Michelle Cimetta, and David Antar, together with their entire team and technology partners, have set a new standard of security for the City of Bridgeport."

A+ Technology & Security provides integrated, IP-based technology solutions to major school districts and universities, municipalities, Fortune 500 companies, healthcare campuses, utilities and many other types of public and private entities. The company's expertise in security technology, security infrastructure and professional A/V systems enables it to deliver comprehensive solutions that all harness the power of network connectivity. It is the largest provider of security solutions for K-12 districts in the metro New York area. Founded in 1989, the company is currently headquartered in Bay Shore, NY.