



## Special Mission *NOT* Impossible

Specialized proprietary software can do wonderful things, but sometimes it can be lacking in ways that are costly and prone to mistakes if humans have to intervene to get their job done.

When a sorely needed feature is wanted, it's good practice to check the forums and support systems for a given product to see if there are any work arounds. After you have checked the KB (Knowledge Base) for the software and come up empty, you can often then put in a support ticket to see if they can shed some light on how to do the thing you are trying to do.

If after all of that you still can't get done what you are trying to do, then what? Many places will let you put in a "Feature Request". Some of these companies will have these customer requests available for others to view and then vote on which ones should be a higher priority to get a requested feature added.

Sadly, the feature you want may not be popular enough that it ever gets included in a future release for months or years if ever. Then what do you do? Live with it? Change products? Some folks do change products only to find that the product they had been using was actually better than what they switched to.

We had this issue recently at my work and it was confirmed by the software company that "there is currently no way to do that". So did we put in a Feature Request, you bet we did! So now we can see if the community of other users happen to see this in the list of requests and up-vote it so maybe it will be added.

In the mean time, if we think outside the rigid box they have us in, is there anything we can do to work around this lack of functionality?

Maybe... you see, this product uses a database which has the data we need, but it's in multiple tables and we don't know the schema layout of their system so it's going to take some serious investigation and testing to see if we can safely extract the data we know is held within this behemoth database system.

On the surface this sure sounds like an impossible mission and may not be worth the time and effort since we *can* get what we need, albeit in a painfully time consuming, with potential for human error with all kinds of extra clicking and right-clicking. How much time and effort do you put in such an endeavor?

Thankfully, because this was "a dream" the office administrator had, I was allowed to spend a few days of time to do the investigation and was able to unravel enough of the database schema layout to create the SQL (Structured Query Language) that allow us to extract the data we needed. Hurray!

This is wonderful news, but we still need a way to take the data and manipulate it into the final product we are looking for. How do we do that?

Now I had to write a program to take the raw data we are now able to collect and present it in a way that would let us make use of the Mail-Merge feature in LibreOffice so we can get the results we desire.

Since most of the programs I have written lately have been with PHP, I thought why not try PHP even though this is not being used to present a web page in a browser, this computer language can still be used like most other programming languages. This also means that I don't have to compile the program like I would have to if it was written in a language like C/C++, Ruby or Rust. PHP is plenty fast enough too!!

The other advantage is it's easier to quickly tweak/maintain the program by others if needed some day.

Well, I just got it working by February 1<sup>st</sup> and it will save us as much as an hour of human time a day!!

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# Presidents Corner

Dear Members,

Well another month gone and time to start a new month. At this time we believe that we are able to again meet in the party room at Apple Barrel (at Sapp Bros.) in C.B.

If you have any ideas for meeting demonstration topics, let us know!  
Our February 15, 2022 meeting will be even better if you're all able to attend!  
Hope to see you there!

Sincerely,  
David Ladd

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Please check back often at

<https://www.mapcc.com>

For updates as we have them for our next club meeting.

Thank you for your support.

**Meetings – January-November (*usually*)**

**Apple Barrel (at Sapp Bros.)**

**2608 S. 24th St.**

**Council Bluffs, Iowa**

**MEETING BEGINS: 7 PM** (NOT in December)

# **Minutes of the November 16, 2021 Meeting**

## ***(No meeting December or January)***

The meeting was called to order at 7pm with David Ladd presiding; there were 7 members present.

### **First Drawing**

The \$10 drawing was won by Mariel Kendall.

### **Minutes and Treasury Report**

Minutes and treasury reports were read and approved by the members present.

### **Old Business**

Reminder that the club's 2021 Christmas party is at the normal meeting spot this year on December 21st.

### **New Business (and Discussions)**

Traditionally we've played 'PO-KE-NO', but we currently don't have a 'PO-KE-NO' system, so there was a motion we purchase a 'PO-KE-NO' kit for approximately \$15 to \$20 each and we can just use pennies for 'chips'. We believe two boxes should be enough at least for now. This was seconded and approved by the members present. We will also need the \$1 coins we traditionally give out as 'prizes' for winning the 'PO-KE-NO' games. Kevin will obtain these items.

Some mentioned Windows 11 and that they'd like to know more about it and see a demonstration in 2022. The new Raspbian Pi OS code named 'Bullseye' is now available. Raspberry Pi 4's with C0T chip can run at 1.8GHz vs 1.5GHz with the new OS version. You most likely want to ensure you have adequate cooling. Also discussed: Calculators, tank printers, scanners, faxing, modems, Office 365 & MS Word for printing envelopes, Christmas Cards, labels, playing computer games, even Boys Town history and Orphan Train.

### **Demo**

The "demo" was done by Bruce on the new and future computer chips from Intel and AMD with more and or faster (and slower) compute cores. Up to 128 cores within the next few years (for large data centers).

### **Stick-Around Drawing**

The stick around drawing (\$4.50) was won by Don Atkinson.

### **Adjourned**

Meeting was adjourned at 8:17pm.

*Minutes recorded by Bruce 11/16/2021*

# **M.A.P.C.C.**

Established 1982

The Metro Area Personal Computer Club Newsletter is published monthly and posted on the club website: <http://www.mapcc.com>

## **Meetings:**

**3rd Tuesday of the month at 7 p.m. (WHEN ALLOWED TO)**

Apple Barrel (party room)

2608 S. 24th St.

Council Bluffs, IA 51501

## **Elected Officers:**

President: David Ladd

Vice President: Kevin Holloway

Secretary: Bruce

Treasurer: Kevin Holloway

## **Appointed Officers:**

Newsletter Editor: Bruce

## **Annual Membership Dues:**

Individual: \$15.00 Family: \$20.00

## **Club Motto:**

***“Pass It On”***

Contact: (531) 600-8847