

City of Alexandria, Virginia
Commission on Information Technology

February 17, 2022 AGENDA
IT Commission Meeting- ZOOM CALL
7:00 - 8:30 p.m.

1. **Introductions & welcome** (Introductions & Welcome)
2. Approval of January 20 Minutes (below)
3. **-Update on City's Fiber Backbone project** - (IT Staff, City of Alexandria)
(Map showing progress areas?)

-City's Competitive Provider proposal update (Vanetta; Catharine)
4. **Digital Equity Plan Committee** (Co-Chairs: Kelly Booze/Catharine Rice/)
 - Update on ACPS Digital issues
 - Update on City's ARPA funds (\$420k) for Digital Equity Plan (Catharine) See attached)
 - a. Computer Core --Teacher Steve!; CC now under contract for help desk
 - b. Digital Equity Plan study- collecting names for RFP distribution
 - c. Broadband Analyst (Lead by IT Dept- in Budget?); Separate funding needed for Digital Equity Director.
 - FCC Emergency Connectivity Fund – Now converted to [Affordable Connectivity Program](#) via Federal Infrastructure & Jobs bill – puts FCC in charge - \$14.2 billion (\$30 monthly subsidy)
5. **Legislative Committee** (Chair: Sara Crifasi +Catharine Rice)
 - a. Federal – ARPA [Final Treasury Rules](#) issued. Opens up funds for urban broadband needs use through wider terms.
 - b. Federal Infrastructure & Jobs Act ([\\$8 billion for VA overall](#)) NTIA [holding public listening](#) sessions (next Feb 23 on Digital Equity Act Programs).
 - c. VA Broadband Grant program update
 - i. Leadership staff out under new Gov
 - ii. [HB 249](#) (Delegate Davis seeks to widen access to VATI funds by urban communities)
6. **CyberSecurity/Disinformation Committee** (Stephen Morris, Tim Casey (Co-Chairs), J.D. Maddox, Ricardo Alfaro) – update?
7. **[Charter Rewrite Committee](#)** (Catharine, Chris, Tim, Steve Davidson)
8. Next ITC meeting –March 17th.

City of Alexandria, Virginia
Commission on Information Technology

January 20, 2022 IT Commission Meeting Minutes
7:00 – 8:30 PM
Virtual Meeting

In attendance: Sara Crifasi (SC), Ricardo Alfaro (RA), Brandon Mosoriak (BM), Catharine Rice (CR), Chris Soghoian (CS), Steve Davidson (SD), Tim Casey (TC), Stephen Morris (SM)

Staff: Vanetta Pledger, Steve Chozick, Smail Farid, Tori Butler, Patrick Eze

Others: Vice Mayor Amy Jackson (AJ)

Absent: Darrlynn Franklin, Michelle Rief, J.D. Maddox, Sundar Kanagarajan

1. Welcome/Introductions

- Vice Mayor Amy Jackson

2. Approval of December 9, 2021 Minutes: unanimous

3. Update on City's fiber backbone project (Patrick Eze)

- Updated map was shared.
- The fiber will go in once construction is complete.
- No delays, project is going as planned.
- Still eight miles complete, but handholds are now being installed in the eight miles.

City's Competitive Provider Proposals

- City has received four proposals to bring fiber to the home: Shentel, Lumos, Ting, North American Tower Company
- Committee asked to give feedback on these companies from anything that is publicly available
- February date for franchise award (tentative
- SD: Was a formal RFP put out? Yes, there was.
- CR: This is a right-of-way franchise, they would be using their own fiber.
- CS: Any other role for committee? VP: This period for comment is our opportunity, most of the process will be private.
- CS: Lumos uses teaser rates, Ting has a low-cost plan but it is low speed.
- TC: Is for bids normal, low, high? CR: Has never seen four bids in the past decade. VP: City is happy with this, it has been a lot of work and a struggle to get to this point. We're hopeful this will come to fruition.
- RA: Concerned that what the IT Commission can/can't do isn't enough input for the importance and magnitude of the process.
- SD: Can the Commission's charter be rewritten? CR: It needs to go through Council.
- SC: Could we be included, via a confidentiality letter?
- SD: Can we play a role in the evaluation stage without violating confidentiality?
- CS: What's to stop FIOS issue happening again if City awards franchises and they don't deliver? Are we getting commitments that they will build? VP: Inside

the specifications franchise has to provide a bond that they will provide the service. She will take this back to the attorneys.

- AJ to CS: Have you asked the Mayor these questions? CS: Trying to get info here, if I get something interesting I will forward it to the Mayor.
- SM: Can one of the franchises 'claim' a neighborhood? VP: Providers will provide to the entire City, not just certain neighborhoods.
- CS: Will franchises micro-trench, or use the City's conduit, or both? Could use both but City's won't be done for four years.
- SD: Suggest we don't use FIOS/Verizon as an example, they decided to give up on FIOS nationwide, not just in our area.
- TC: Where does franchise fee go? VP: Believe it's to the general fund.

4. Digital Equity Plan (Kelly Booze and Michelle Rief)

- Computer Core is creating a help desk.
- \$420K of ARPA funds has been set aside for Digital Equity Plan, Broadband Strategist and Policy Analyst.
- A broadband study is planned.
- CS: Can this be paid for by the savings from not using Comcast?

5. Legislative Committee (Sara Crifasi & Catharine Rice)

- Emergency Broadband Benefit (EBB) name changed to Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP)
- Final Treasury rules for ARPA disbursement have just come out.

6. Cybersecurity Committee (Stephen Morris)

- Digital Self-Defense course available through Computer Core.

7. Adjourn by unanimous vote at 8:30pm. (Next meeting is January 20, 2022).

Digital Equity Plan update:

\$420k ,000 ARPA funds approved fall 2021:

1a. Community Tech Support (\$60k) – contract being rendered w/Computer Core

The City will partner with Computer Core an Alexandria-based nonprofit and also one of the region’s leading nonprofits in addressing the most pressing and overlooked factors regarding the digital divide—those who have ready access to computer technology, digital navigation skills and internet access and those who do not. CORE maintains a singular focus on the goals of this contract: closing the digital divide. Through this program, Computer Core will create and publicize a community call center for City residents to ask computer use questions. Staffing this center with CORE student interns who are members of Alexandria’s diverse communities and who serve as trusted Community Navigators able to build rapport and converse in a variety of different languages. CORE proposes to staff this call center through its “15 Program” in which it pledges to hire 15 Alexandria resident adult student interns at \$15/hour for 15 weeks and 15 hours/week. Some interns may be hired on continue the center’s work (beyond the scope of this program). All will gain valuable work experience and be able to move into similar help-desk employment.

In addition to providing this “on-the-ground” program and directly assisting residents, Computer Core will set-up a ticketing system to track community questions and requests. This system will provide data to understand what the most common community needs are, such as device help, literacy programs, or financial assistance. The data will inform the digital equity action plan.

1b. Digital Equity Action Plan (\$60k) -Planning & Zoning Dept Team has lead

The City will seek a contractor in the creation of the Digital Equity Action Plan (DEAP), a plan that will uncover specifically what digital equity means in Alexandria and what actions should be taken to address the gaps. Part of the action plan will include quantifiable measures that can apply to digital equity and be improved upon. The contractor will support the development of the plan by creating, executing, and performing analysis on a survey and facilitating focus groups with targeted populations. The selected contractor will design and administer three (3) focus groups targeting three types of households: Low-income; Disadvantaged households; Non-English speaking households; and Low-income elderly households (age 60+), that address the following questions:

- What level of access to technology do Alexandria households currently have (household devices, internet plans and cellular services)?
- Are Alexandria residents using the internet to its highest potential?
- Do Alexandria residents have the necessary skills to succeed on the internet? What gaps currently exist?

(Note: This approach is based on Arlington County’s recent [Digital Equity Action Plan](#)).

1c. Broadband Strategist: \$300K – IT Dept has lead

Related:

\$1.12 million for Re-employment & Upskilling project

260 residents will be served through individualized support to boost their competitiveness in the labor force and improve their household income. The components of the program are listed below:

- **Re-employment and Up-skilling:** These efforts play an essential role in addressing the immediate needs of the economy and improving household incomes. This component includes provision of

retraining opportunities that lead to industry recognized certifications, work readiness, digital literacy, and other critical supportive services to employment.

- **Work-Based Learning: Work-Based Learning (WBL)** is an educational approach that provides individuals with real-life work experiences where they can apply academic and technical skills to develop and increase their employability. WBL can be any activity that places the participant in an authentic workplace, and could include work sampling, job shadowing, internships, or apprenticeships. Individuals will be compensated \$15.00 - \$20.00 hourly based off education and experience. Work-Based Learning hosts will be responsible for the oversight of the participant and provide professional development, skills-training as well as weekly supervision and support.
- **Digital Literacy & Equity for Employment:** The Digital Literacy & Equity for Employment will support residents' digital literacy needs as well as help underserved populations maintain the operation of their personal internet-connected technology. Services include purchase of laptops and hotspots, vouchers to computer repair services, tuition for digital literacy training, individual coaching covering the usage of technology and the internet for job search activities.