City of Alexandria, Virginia
Commission on Information Technology

February 17, 2022 IT Commission Meeting Minutes
7:00 – 9:00 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), J.D. Maddox, Kelly Carmichael Booz (KC), Sundar Kanagarajan (SK), Vice Mayor Amy Jackson (AJ)

Staff: Vanetta Pledger, Steve Chozick, Smail Farid, Patrick Eze, Abdi Barre, Lalit Sharma

1.   **Introduction and Welcome**

2.   **Approval of January 20, 2022 Minutes: unanimous**

3.   **Update on City's fiber backbone project (ITS staff)**

- Updated map was shared.
- (SD): Is there an economic incentive to finish early? Steve Chozick: No, there isn't.
- (RA): Are we waiting for all conduit to be completed before installing fiber? Vanetta: Yes, we are.
- (RA): Is the same contractor installing the physical infrastructure and the fiber? Vanetta: Yes

    City's Competitive Provider Proposals

- Ting and Lumos have been awarded broadband franchises.
- (CS): Concerned with Ting and low internet speeds for low-income families. Vanetta: All housing will be offered gig-speed internet.
- (RA): Will there be customer service for different languages? Vanetta: City has been advised both providers provide multilingual support.

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.

5.   **Legislative Committee (Sara Crifasi & Catharine Rice)**

- Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) is the renamed Emergency Broadband Benefit (EBB).

6.   **Cybersecurity/Disinformation Committee (Stephen Morris)**
- Digital Self-Defense course available through Computer Core.

7.   **City's 'One-Dig' Policy**
- Lalit Sharma, from T&ES, joined to discuss City's 'One-Dig' policy.
- There is a certain level of coordination between City departments, but there isn't a complete system in place to ensure all City departments are notified of digging.

8.   **Adjourn by unanimous vote at 9:00pm. (Next meeting is March 17, 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 tomove 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.