

City of Alexandria, Virginia
Commission on Information Technology

February 22, 2021 IT Commission Meeting Minutes
7:00 – 8:30 PM
Virtual Meeting

In attendance: Catharine Rice (CR), Chris Soghoian (CS), Brandon Mosoriak (BM), Ricardo Alfaro (RA), Sara Crifasi (SC), Marcus Washington (MW), J.D. Maddox (JM), Sundar Kanagarajan (SK), Lynda Bennett (LB), Michelle Rief (MR)

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

Absent: Chris Lewis, Darrlyn Franklin, John Sczech

Guests: Members of Public attended.

- 1. Welcome/Introductions**
- 2. Approval of January 25, 2021 minutes** – Motion by CS, seconded by SK, minutes approved by unanimous vote.
- 3. Update/Presentation on City’s fiber backbone project (Steve Chozick, Patrick Eze and Smail Farid)**
 - There were six bids in response to the ITB. The bids are currently with the Purchasing department.
 - Awarding should happen in the spring.
 - Consists of two conduits: one full conduit for City use, one empty conduit for private sector use.
 - The project is a four-year build. Once the project is awarded management of the project will be given to DPI (Department of Project Implementation).
 - CS: How fast will the connection be to the schools? 40GB to start with, it could go up to 100G depending on the equipment.
 - Can fit six or seven 288-fiber bundles in each of the two conduits. There will be one bundle in each conduit to start.
 - We are partnering with Arlington to put conduit under Four Mile Run bridge.
 - We have the opportunity to tie together our conduit with the Virginia Tech infrastructure that’s being put in place for their Innovation Campus. Details on this are pending.
 - CS: What is the backhaul plan to get our fiber to Ashburn? There isn’t a clear plan in place yet but there are several options: Arlington, Fairfax, fiber swap, Comcast lease.
 - RA: How will change orders be handled? Change orders will be needed for flexibility as infrastructure changes during the years of construction.
 - CS: Will the City be lighting the fiber in phases? There won’t be any pulling of fiber until year three of the project. This is to eliminate splicing and speed loss that would occur.
 - MW: How many fibers to each school? 12 or 24 depending on the hub site that services the particular school.
 - CR: Are we requiring developers to put in laterals to their buildings? Can we require rather than request? P&Z department (Planning & Zoning) talks to developers. We have tried to have a P&Z rep come to one of our meetings to discuss. Staff: We will be checking on this.
 - There is some four-inch conduit going in at Virginia Tech and Fire Station 209.

4. Digital Equity Plan Committee

- As part of the City's COVID response, Council has tasked the committee with coming up with a digital equity plan. IT staff approved IT Csn to attempt a first draft outline. CR will head up and encourages DEP Committee members to join in this effort (members are MR, RA, JM)
- CS: Broadband authority letter from the committee was sent to the Mayor and Council. Mayor responded with thank you.
- Creating a broadband authority is not a difficult process but will require a lot of paperwork.
- JM: Are there any downsides to municipal provisioning of Internet, will there be extra work? CR: There will need to be a feasibility study and we can benefit from discussions with communities who have already created broadband authorities.
- RA: Will the City be able to make money through the broadband authority? CR: Best approach is not to assume this infrastructure as a revenue source. Economic value will be the associated economic growth and community vitality.

5. Legislative Committee

- CR: Our Dec 20 letter was received by VA Broadband Authority Council. Final budget amendments did not mirror letter's request. Senate and House Amendments instead create a one-year temporary pilot for Broadband Authority's to be able to directly apply for VATI funds without private provider and cap Broadband Authority awards (in total) at 10% of total funds available.
- SC presented Emergency Broadband Program: How to advertise to our residents that they can apply for this benefit?
- Comcast may or may not be part of this program.
- \$100 one-time payback for a device, \$50/month for internet service.
- Comcast 1.2TB data caps: Comcast is backing off for the rest of 2021 in certain states, Virginia is not one of these
- SC: Should we speak up, send a letter to Council? SC will draft letter.
- The City is currently renegotiating its cable franchise contract with Comcast. ITS will talk to their consultant working on the renegotiation to see if the above can be included in the contract.
- Tori Butler: links to IT policy information will be up on the internet by March 4.
- CR: JM had asked Why don't we focus on 5G instead of fiber?
- Verizon won't tell the City if we're getting 5G, we can't force them to give it to us.
- 5G may still be years away.
- 5G and fiber to the neighborhood aren't equivalent technologies.

6. Adjourn by unanimous vote at 8:30pm. (Next meeting is via Zoom March 22, 2021.