

## Alexandria Commission on Information Technology

Minutes  
January 11, 2010 Meeting

### **Meeting called to order at 7:02 PM**

*Members present:* Philip Acosta, Nina Balia, Daniel Brooks, Steve Cooper, Councilwoman Alicia Hughes, Helen Morris, Kostas Liopiros, Deb Roepke (for Del Pepper), Lynda Rudd, Marie Schuler, Bob Soltys

*Excused:* Catherine Hogan

*City Staff present:* Tom Trobridge, Sharon Annear (administrative aide to Councilwoman Hughes)

### Welcome – New Members

Three new members were welcomed and introduced themselves: Nina Balia, Steve Cooper and Bob Soltys. The vice-chair, Dan Brooks, confirmed that all had been sworn in.

### Policies and Procedures

The Chair, Kostas Liopiros, outlined Commission procedures for the benefit of the new members. The Commission is advisory to the City Council. The City's Information Technology Services (ITS) staff provides administrative support. Regular meetings are held bimonthly on the second Monday of odd-numbered months. Special meetings are held to consider time sensitive items, such as the review of the City's Information Technology Plan. The meeting agenda is developed distributed approximately one week before the meeting. All members are encouraged to suggest and develop agenda items.

The Commission submits an annual report to the Council regarding its activities for the year. The report includes an attendance report. Attendance is evaluated according to Section 2-4-7 of the City Code, which requires appointees to attend at least 75% of the yearly committee meetings. According to the code:

“Absences may be excused because of personal illness or serious illness of members of the immediate family, death of a family member, unscheduled or unforeseen business trips, and emergency work assignments only. All other absences are recorded as unexcused.”

### Approval of Minutes

The minutes for the July 13, 2009, September 14, 2009 and November 9, 2009 meetings were approved with a correction to attendance at the September 14 meeting.

### IT Commission Secretary

The Commission will continue without a Secretary for the remainder of the year (i.e. through June). Kostas proposed that the Commission's policies and procedures for nominating and electing officers be reviewed and revised at that time.

### Commission Page/City Web Site – Status

The Commission's web page has been out-of-date from last fall. City staff has promised to update the Commission's web page to keep it current and to emphasize citizen participation.

### Schedule for FY 2011 IT Plan Review

The City's draft Information Technology Plan for FY2011-FY2016 will be available on February 9. A special Commission meeting was agreed for Wednesday February 17 at 7 pm for the ITS staff to present and brief the plan to the Commission.

### ACPS Computer and Internet Divide

Kostas Liopiros distributed copies of the Alexandria City Public Schools (ACPS) "Internet Access Survey of 9<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> Grade Students," which was conducted at the beginning of 2009 at the Commission's request. ACPS provides laptop computers to all high school students and students are encouraged to take their laptops home with them. However, when away from school facilities, students can only access the ACPS network with a slow, dial-up connection. ACPS does not permit access to their network through the Internet. The ACPS survey showed that approximately 8.6 percent of the 9<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> grade student population (about 250 students) did not have a landline connection at home to access the ACPS network.

Kostas also provided information on the cable industry's Adoption Plus program to provide cable broadband Internet service to middle-aged school children in low-income households that currently do not receive broadband service. Major cable broadband Internet service providers (ISPs) are participating in the program, including Comcast in Alexandria. This program, however, will not be available to upper school households.

Helen Morris, the Alexandria School Board representative, discussed ACPS efforts to expand student access to the SCOPS network through the Internet. All student laptops will have enabled wireless broadband Internet access outside of ACPS facilities, starting February 2010. Student laptops will be equipped with a client software filter from 8e6 Technologies.

ACPS has applied for a state grant to establish wireless hotspots in City recreation centers for student use. (Most recreation centers are adjacent to city schools and convenient for students). ACPS also proposes to create an "Internet in a box" program to loan laptops to middle school students and families.

ACPS is also evaluating establishing a laptop program for middle school students.

Helen challenged the Commission to consider ways that the City could work with ACPS to expand Internet access for students. This could, for example, involve expanding wireless hotspots in and around public buildings. Lynda Rudd, the City Libraries representative, noted that the libraries and ACPS have been in discussion about ways to coordinate their programs for providing Internet access.

Helen noted that ACPS might also be interested in reusing equipment from the defunct citywide Wi-Fi project.

The Commission members discussed the need for better data regarding access issues in ACPS. It was recommended that ACPS conduct another survey across all schools in the system. Helen suggested that the survey be conducted after the start of the next school year to get better data on how the new programs and policies are working.

The members also emphasized the importance for the City to have data regarding citizen's access to and use of the Internet and broadband to utilize City services. The data should include demographics to the degree necessary to identify and evaluate possible courses of action. The ACPS survey, although useful, provides only a partial picture of what may be a larger problem. It was noted that the City does not have a point-of-contact or person responsible for this issue.

It was agreed that the Commission should develop and forward a recommendation to City Council.

#### Civic Engagement – Citizen Smart phone Access

Due to time, the discussion on citizen smart phone access was deferred to a future meeting.

#### New Business

Tom Trobridge, Director IT Services, introduced Adam Rujan of Plante & Moran. Plante and Moran has been engaged by the City to assess the City's use and planning of IT. The study was requested by City council and the results will be provided to Council in early spring. Adam requested interviews with Commission members. The Chair invited members to stay after the meeting for an informal discussion.

**Meeting adjourned at 9:05 PM.**