



# CITY OF BLOOMINGTON

Information & Technology Services

## Bloomington Digital Underground BDUAC Meeting Memorandum

Per the state disaster emergency order that ended March 3rd, 2022, this meeting was held in a hybrid format with board members able to attend both virtually and in person.

### **Thursday, June 16th, 2022 4PM**

Location: Zoom  
Facilitator: Rick Dietz  
Board Attendance In Person: Mike Allen, Marianne Chitwood, Chris Robb, Mike Trotzke, Mike Sullivan  
Board Attendance Remote:  
Staff Attendance: Desiree King, Rick Dietz  
Members of the public: Eric Ost, Scott Layman (Meridiam)

### **Consideration of a Resolution to support Meridiam building a city-wide gigabit fiber optic network in Bloomington and to recommend the Board of Public Works (BPW) allow Meridiam to use excess City conduit in connection with this project.**

Dietz presented on the (potential) Meridiam project. Discussion on slides isn't aligned with the TIF process, so skimmed through some of the slides in order to discuss Meridiam's use of the BDU conduit for the purpose of the resolution.

Went over current objectives, bridge digital divide.

Current state, 25/3Mbps not adequate. Gap in lower socioeconomic status homes with children, homework need.

High speed is also a need for working from home.

COVID further highlighted equity gaps, current internet subsidy programs aren't attracting new users, don't go far enough with current offerings. Current providers don't want competition, but Meridiam will ensure further competition after exclusivity ISP period.

Dietz showed the timeline of community broadband effort. Started in 2016 with a Request for Information, reduced to Axia. They were bought by firm, they changed their market.

Engaged in other potential partners, worked with Meritronet, but they merged with a larger company.

Have also worked with AT&T, Comcast, and Smithville, but to date they're not pursuing community wide broadband with these goals.

Throughout this effort, completed the Digital Equity Strategic Plan, this effort was part of that. Discussions started with Wyerrd in September 2020, they were purchased and partnership dissolved. But Wyerrd pointed the City toward Meridiam, W shared details from their site visits, documentation with Meridiam. Things progressed, signed LOI in August 2021.

Then inventoried conduit assets, engaged with Meridiam on multiple site visits. Proven they're different from past potential partners. International public infrastructure, membership driven firm, benefit organization. They have regular fiduciary responsibilities but also have a social element of charter: UN sustainable development goals, ESG (Environmental, Social, and Corporate Governance) goals.

Find Meridiam to be good fit for broadband goals and digital equity goals.

Skipped over TIF goals that were covered in Council meeting on 6/15.

Meridiam proposed to build an open access gigabit speed fiber optic network. After a period, will open up to other internet service providers. It would allow ISPs to reach communities outside Bloomington (Martinsville, Shelbyville, Columbus)

\$50 million investment, creating jobs with Bloomington office. Office will manage network in South Central.

Pricing will be competitive, agreed to net neutrality, won't be change of ownership within 10 years, don't expect this to happen within terms of contract (30 years). Meridiam is in business of long term asset management, have never sold anything they've bought or built. Build will start this year, take three years.

Digital Equity plan initiative crafted. 250 Mbps up and down, no conn fees, \$30/month, free after gov sub

Will also staff Dig Equity staff member

\$85 annually to DE fund, available at all BHA apartment buildings, eligibility is broad and simple, if they qualify for existing lower socioeconomic programs, they'll qualify for this.

Partnership aligns with DESP goals.

City contributing \$1 million to DE fund to support network drops, will be active in DE initiative, TIF district established, returning \$10.9 to Meridiam for business tax.

Called a spider TIF because of its shape, spidering out into the committee. Multiple Indiana communities have deployed this kind of TIF.

Project boundary includes areas ID's for annexation. Will still be able to access the broadband, even if not annexed.

Dietz opened up to questions:

Robb has no questions, Marianne felt the same.

Trotzke: Surprised by comments last night

T asked about TIF process. (see video)

Robb: Been a long journey, fortuitous and forward looking. City has done great job. Cities thinking about it now but Bloomington got a four-year start. Everyone that will benefit will owe the City a debt.

Sullivan: Somebody pinch me, I think this is actually happening.

T: Glad we found a partner, has the mission, mitigates the risk.

Dietz: Been excited before, but previous partnerships weren't as good.

**Robb moved, Marianne seconded. Resolution adopted unanimously.**

Dietz: Greatly appreciates BDUAC support both inside and outside of City. Attributes success to lots of advice from this group. Conveyed on behalf of the City.

## ITS Department Updates

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### City-wide Fiber Broadband Initiative

Trotzke: Started thinking about how to spend \$85K

Dietz: Not yet. Digital Equity effort multi-pronged, can really get connections, is it internet, and can you get people connected (Video at 35 min)

More efforts, looking to partner with ROI initiatives.

Once process in place, a number of provisions, seeing how well they're getting lower income households connected. Will bring that discussion back to this group, haven't defined how it will look, how it will work. Will make sure Meridiam is meeting their commitment.

Trotzke: Reminds me of before times. (video)

Trotzke: \$1 million going to DE fund, have you figured out deployment process. Reimbursement basis?

Dietz: Yes and no. We know we'll need to establish a fund, will go through Council, guess it will be a non-reverting fund, but unsure of mechanism to make it work.

Trotzke: After last night's meeting comments, wondered if that's enough money and know it won't go away if this doesn't work out.

### Digital Equity

Desiree reported on 2022 process.

### Member Reports (Items not on the agenda)

Trotzke: Nothing particularly exciting. Periodic sold, moved out of Mill, trying to move to Trades Garage. Squatting in multiple places since didn't renew lease.

Combine was great, will start planning next years later this summer.

Chitwood: Entered into three year contract with OmniSoc, something partners have asked for a while.

Sullivan: Nothing new. May be traveling more to Hawaii when I become a grandparent.

Trotzke: Should mention tech center in the Kiln. Nothing has happened since building costs rose during the pandemic. Trying to figure out how to best leverage this, a hot topic in the Trades District world.

Dietz: Thank you. Next steps will be providing this resolution to the board of Public Works. Thank you for your role in this project on what has been a long and winding road. Looking forward to continuing to work with you all to ensure we get what we're expecting and community knows what's going on.

Meeting adjourned

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