City of Bloomington: Bloomington Digital Underground Advisory Committee

Date of Record: November 4, 2004

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Summary

Bloomington Underground Advisory Committee (hereafter "Committee") meeting held Thursday November 4, 2004 at 4:00 p.m. in the Hooker Room of City Hall at Showers, 401 N. Morton St., Bloomington, IN.

Roll Call

Committee Members Present
    Brian Klebur

Committee Members Absent
    Rick Dietz, Indiana University
    Mark McMath, Bloomington, Hospital
    Bruce Myers, Kiva
    Charlie Webb, CallNet
    Linda Williamson, Bloomington Economic Development Corporation
    Dennis Morrison, Center of Behavioral Health
    Brian Voss, Indiana University

City of Bloomington Staff Present
    Rick Routon, User Support & Network Operations Manager, ITS
    Greg Volan, Chief Information Officer, ITS
    Ron Walker, ECD

Guests Present
    Brent Engle, Project Manager, InfoComm Systems
    James Goldman, Chief Technology Officer, InfoComm Systems
    Brett Skilbred, Network Engineer, InfoComm Systems

Handouts

1. October 7, 2004 Meeting Minutes
2. November 4, 2004 Meeting Agenda
3. City of Bloomington Telecommunications Strategic Plan

Minutes

Meeting called to order at 4:00 p.m.

I.   Administrative Business
      A. Minutes from October 7, 2004 meeting not approved because Committee quorum
          was not present.

II.   Kick-Off Meeting on Strategic Planning Project (hereafter "Project")
      A. Jim Goldman outlined the general flow of discussion, highlighting that InfoComm
          used a rigorous project management process and assured Committee that no points
          or information would be lost. Jim stated that he would retain ultimate responsibility for
          InfoComm's work and would review all major milestones and goals during the project.
      B. Brent Engle, InfoComm Project Manager, introduced himself and stated that he
          would take a supporting role to Brett Skilbred, Committee's main contact.
      C. Brett Skilbred, InfoComm Network Engineer introduced himself and stated that he
          would control the day-to-day activities for the project including scheduling, conducting
          interviews, data collection, and data analysis.
            i.   Brett stated that he would be available after 12:00 p.m. on weekdays and
                 that the Telecommunications project would be his only duties as an
                 InfoComm employee.
      D. Brett Skilbred stated that the first set of tasks in Project involved data collection and
          that he wanted to get input from the committee on the most effective and/or desirable
          methods of data collection.
            i.   Bret Skilbred further stated that focus groups were a very effective and
                 efficient method to initially gathering data and to encourage discussion
                 among participants that draws out new problems.
      E. Brett Skilbred said that, after the focus group meetings were finished, individuals
          could be identified from these groups for interviews, or electronic surveys could be
          distributed to reinforce the findings of the focus groups.
      F. Jim Goldman added that previous studies have had problems with accurate
          constituent representation.
      G. Greg Volan verified that InfoComm used five (5) constituent groups: residential,
          education, government, industry/business, and social services.
      H. Brent Engle added that these groups also provide an indicator for future
          developments and trends in the general population. Brent Engle also stated that
          significant progress was made in being able to use power lines.
            i.   Jim Goldman stated that this progress would help especially in rural areas
                 where wireless capabilities were limited and user density requirements were
                 less stringent.
      I.   Brett Skilbred stated that, in identifying and accomplishing service requirements for
           these constituencies, that the Committee would provide direction and the scope in
           defining the "desired state" for the project.
      J.   Brent Engle stated the focus group sessions and related quantitative data should
           help the Committee in establishing the direction and parameters for the project.
      K. Brett Skilbred stated that the diversity of the surrounding areas makes it necessary to
          gather information from the focus groups to establish the target market and for the
          Committee to accurately assess progress from the "current state" to the "desired
          state".
      L.   Ron Walker asked if the focus group meetings would be comprised of each of the
           constituent sectors separately. Jim Goldman responded that InfoComm has
           conducted focus group interviews in that manner and that the data retrieved from
           those sessions provided adequate information and also provided insight into
           unforeseen problems such as infrastructure complications.

M. Greg Volan clarified that the Committee should take an active role in helping InfoComm to establish guidelines in the data collection process and to establish intermediate goals in the process.

N. Ron Walker asked if the scope of InfoComm's work was to establish the current state of the BDU infrastructure. Greg Volan replied that several recommendations from the Committee were possible:
   1. The City needs to improve the existing network
   2. The City needs to "sell off" the existing network and approach Telecommunications from a different perspective.

O. Brett Skilbred stated that InfoComm would need information concerning Bloomington strategic objectives concerning information technology services, specifically at the mayor's level. Jim Goldman added that InfoComm's study should enable and/or take into account any higher level strategic objectives of the City of Bloomington.

P. Ron Walker responded that no formalized strategy exists.
   i. Organizational and outside entity objectives do exist and could be provided to InfoComm.
   ii. Ron Walker stated that there was a focus on downtown Bloomington development in terms of attracting technology and life science jobs.

Q. Greg Volan stated that multiple entities within Bloomington expressed an interest in fiber networks, but because a distinct unit was not available, these deals closed.

R. Brett Skilbred asked about previous strategies for fiber implementation.
   i. Ron Walker stated that they worked with Smithville Telephone to serve three locations in Bloomington and one in Paoli; these fiber services were primarily for data administration purposes.
   ii. Greg Volan added that the Committee also tried to identify any other buildings across the city that could have been connected to the fiber network.

S. Greg Volan identified four areas to concentrate on for fiber development in Bloomington: west, northwest, south/southwest, and downtown. Greg Volan added that the market for fiber networks is becoming really active this year.

T. Greg Volan stated that, in terms of economic development strategy, Linda Williamson should be contacted for detailed information.

U. Brian Klebur outlined his duties within his organizations, stating that they were concerned primarily with small business development. Brian Klebur added that a parent point exists in the Showers building, extending fiber networks to Indiana University, to Smithville Digital, to Kiva, and to the City.
   i. Brett Skilbred asked if there had been any discussion of moving the parent point. Greg Volan responded that Kiva likes the point where it is, even though other entities would have agreed to move it.

V. Ron Walker stated that new real estate would be available in the Research Technology Park and that it may or may not require a substantial investment in fiber technology.

W. Greg Volan stated that there were two basic kinds of economic development for Bloomington: helping small start-up businesses grow via business parks; and attracting large businesses to the area. Greg Volan asked if the City was concentrating on one method or the other.
   i. Brian Klebur responded by saying that the current philosophy was to develop the technology parks close to the city for businesses that were initially developing and then to move them to periphery parks as they grew to medium and "plus" size operations. This focus allows smaller, entrepreneurial businesses to operate on a level "playing field" where infrastructure exists.

X. Jim Goldman asked if this project should strive for a leadership position, effectively "leap-frogging" the competition; InfoComm can provide a range of initiatives, but this question needs to be answered to establish a market position for BDU.
   i. Brett Skilbred stated that difficulties arise in establishing market trends, analyzing competitor responses, etc.

Y.   Greg Volan asked if the government typically wants to be the "industry leader". Jim Goldman said no, and that the City of Bloomington should be focused on getting more customers onto their network.

Z.   Jim Goldman stated that the real goal of the project should not be focused specifically on technology routing, but rather on the greater impact on the community and how businesses and residents can utilize the infrastructure.

AA. Ron Walker stated that, in not pursuing a goal of developing a world-class technology infrastructure, small communities such as Bloomington have to consider the risk in spending large amounts of funds to develop this infrastructure. Ron Walker also stated that this risk is especially true in small communities not connected to a major interstate highway or without a large research university within the community.

   i.   Greg Volan added the abstract idea of being a market leader in Telecommunications is appealing, but he was not sure that Bloomington would take the risk; that decision ultimately depends on the implementation and development strategy.

   ii. Ron Walker stated that he wants the research/technology parks to be world class centers and that he wants the City of Bloomington to be an enabler of that goal.

BB. Jim Goldman stated that Bloomington would need to assess the aggregate demand for a Telecommunications infrastructure and how prospective businesses would view Bloomington and their level of technology development.

CC. Rick Routon stated that expansion in technology infrastructure would also need to take into account increases in personnel to support this growing system.

DD. Jim Goldman stated that the Committee would receive updated project plans either at each meeting or by memo on a bi-weekly basis.

EE. Brett Skilbred stated that the timeline had been extended to approximately four (4) months, given holiday considerations and adjusting milestones to coincide with Committee meetings. Greg Volan stated that the Committee had agreed to this extension and reiterated that time was not critical to the completion of the project.

FF. Brent Engle stated that InfoComm would need a list of important people in various community sectors to contact for focus group interviews. Brett Skilbred added that the focus group size would range from 12 to 15 people.

GG.   Greg Volan and Rick Routon listed contacts for the education, city/county,

HH. Brett Skilbred asked to see the City Charter and BDU strategic policies. Greg Volan stated that these documents as well as Committee meeting minutes could be made available.

II. Greg Volan listed business/industry contacts for focus group interviews. Greg Volan stated that Indiana economic development strategies should be taken into account.

Meeting adjourned at 5:37 p.m.

Minutes submitted by Matt Nagle, December 2, 2004