

City of Bloomington: Bloomington Digital Underground Advisory Committee

Date of Record: August 5, 2004

Summary:

Bloomington Digital Underground Advisory Committee meeting held on Thursday, August 5, 2004 at 4:00 pm in the Hooker Conference Room of City Hall at Showers, 401 N. Morton St., Bloomington, Indiana.

Roll Call

Committee Members Present:

Rick Dietz, Indiana University

Charlie Webb, CallNet

Committee Members Absent:

Mark McMath, Bloomington Hospital

Dennis Morrison, Center for Behavioral Health

Bruce Myers, Kiva

Brian Voss, Indiana University

Linda Williamson, Bloomington Economic Development Corporation

Guests Present:

Jim Goldman, InfoComm Systems, Inc.

David Sabbagh, City Council member

Staff Present:

Gregory Volan, CIO, City of Bloomington

Rick Routon, User Support and Network Operations Manager, ITS, City of Bloomington

Ron Walker, Economic Development Director, City of Bloomington

Meeting was called to order at approximate 4:10 pm.

I. Administrative Business

- a. Minutes from July 1, 2004 were reviewed. Because no quorum was present, minutes were not approved.

II. Staff Report

- a. Greg Volan explained that he would be going before City Council in late September or early October to present a report on the progress of the BDU Advisory Committee. In October 2003, during the Council meetings when the BDU policies were approved, the administration promised that it would make such a report in one year.
- b. Greg Volan also explained that if the Committee would consider the Strategic Plan Proposal from InfoComm at this meeting and the September meeting. If approved, Volan would seek funding for it when he goes before City Council. At the September meeting, the Committee may also consider pricing options for the use of fiber and conduit.
- c. Rick Dietz asked whether the status report would be circulated to the Committee before it is presented to Council. Greg Volan responded that the purpose of the status report is to give Council an opportunity to revisit whether the BDU Advisory Committee is working well as a committee created by the Board of Public Works,

rather than by ordinance. When the BDU policies were passed in October 2003, the administration agreed to revisit this issue in one year, and the report would express the administration's view on that issue.

III. Old Business: Strategic Plan Proposal from InfoComm

- a. Jim Goldman from InfoComm Systems presented a revised proposal.
- b. He explained that InfoComm has provided consulting for the City of Bloomington for the last two years. This has given them an understanding of the City's "current state," which has reduced the cost of the proposed study by 10% to 20%.
- c. The proposed study is the typical strategic planning study that InfoComm has provided for other communities.
- d. The goal of the study is the creation of a municipal telecommunications platform, which includes (1) infrastructure, (2) administrative support structure, and (3) local regulatory issues. In each of these areas, they will look at current state and desired state, and their analysis will include a gap-analysis between the two and a migration plan.
- e. They will look at five constituencies: residential, educational, government, industrial/business, and social service. The priority given to each depends on the specific needs of the community.
- f. Goldman explained that the measure of success is that the community has a step-by-step action plan and knows exactly what to do next. The strategic plan should be more than a theoretical document that sits on a shelf.
- g. InfoComm has done these plans for communities throughout the state and in some communities outside Indiana, including greater Charlotte, NC.
- h. Greg Volan explained that the advisory committee considered a proposal from InfoComm in July that included a study of the potential users of fiber, and that the advisory committee thought that the study should also include the providers. Volan asked whether the current proposal included providers and potentially other groups.
 - i. Goldman answered that the study makes no restriction on the potential markets that the community may have.
- i. Volan asked what other communities have learned from doing this kind of study. What did they learn that they did not know before?
 - i. Goldman explained that a lot of the work is detective work. They discover assets that were not widely known before. In their study for Noblesville, for example, they found that different government departments had assets, but they had not shared their maps. One of InfoComm's tasks was to consolidate their maps. They discovered they had a good start to a city-wide ring already. They also talked to the county and neighboring municipalities and found that they were close to having a county-wide ring.
 - ii. A lot of what they do is discover potential assets and then bring partners to the table to create win-win situations. Often, the partners are working on their own goals individually. InfoComm tries to bring them together. Early in the process, they usually conduct a fiber symposium.
- j. Volan asked if they had a good idea of what is happening with fiber at the state level.
 - i. Goldman explained that they did. InfoComm submitted a proposal with Indiana Fiber Works on the RFP for I-Light 2. Because the I-Light 2 funds came from Energize Indiana plan, respondents to the RFP had to demonstrate

their impact on economic development. The Indiana Fiber Works / InfoComm proposal was selected by the state, though the state ended up cutting out the InfoComm portion from the proposal. The state and Indiana Fiber Works are in the process of executing contracts.

- ii. The plan is to extend I-Light, which connects Indianapolis, Bloomington, and Lafayette, to eleven other cities around Indiana.
- k. Volan explained that he spoke with Kevin Siminski from IHETS today who asked for a map of the City's fiber assets. Volan stated that he is aware that IHETS was planning on establishing a point of presence in Bloomington, probably at the telecom hotel. Volan also figured that at some point IHETS is going to want to get fiber out to Ivy Tech. Whatever plans IHETS comes up with to get to Ivy Tech, we want to know about, so that effort can be combined with other companies on the west side of Bloomington, such as Cook.
 - i. Goldman explained that this is the kind of thing they do. InfoComm would see IHETS as a customer, and they would be included in the study.
 - ii. Volan stated that it would help Bloomington if InfoComm knew what was happening on the state level.
 - iii. Goldman explained that InfoComm is well known, not just because of their I-Light 2 proposal, but because they have worked with "virtually every corner of the state" with good success. The word of mouth has worked its way back to Indianapolis.
- l. Ron Walker asked if InfoComm would approach Bloomington differently we have fiber resources already in the ground, largely untapped.
 - i. Goldman explained that he finds every community to be unique. However, InfoComm has worked with other communities that already had fiber in the ground.
- m. Volan added that InfoComm has been advising him for several years that Bloomington was unusual. First, we built the fiber and then approached InfoComm for assistance; most communities will consult with InfoComm before building anything. Second, it was the IT department that contacted InfoComm. Usually, they are contacted by the economic development representatives of a community.
- n. David Sabbagh referred to a study on telecommunications done in 1996 or 1997. He thought that Linda Williamson might have a copy of the report and suggested that we take a look at it.
- o. Ron Walker said that Bloomington is a community that has used (telecommunications) resources. He asked whether the recommendations from the study would focus primarily on what our policies should be for these resources.
 - i. Goldman explained that that would be one focus. They would also look to see whether there is unmet demand or demands out there.
- p. Volan asked whether Noblesville hired InfoComm only to help them build a fiber network for government use.
 - i. Goldman said that was only what they started with. Noblesville has broader, economic development goals, such as creating a certified tech park.
- q. Goldman said that, in his experience, he has found having advanced telecommunications infrastructure to be a necessity for economic development in a community. If you don't build it, businesses won't come.

- r. Rick Dietz asked whether other communities have public, education, and government (PEG) channels from their cable provider. That is another potential asset.
 - i. Goldman said it depends on the communities' cable franchise agreements.
- s. Charlie Webb asked what fiber optic work was happening along Morton Street.
 - i. Volan explained that Smithville Digital was connecting to the Smallwood Plaza with fiber.
- t. Webb suggested that perhaps no one is using our fiber because it is dark. The problem always comes back to the last mile.
 - i. Volan suggested that Smallwood is a success because they are using fiber, regardless of the fact that it is not our fiber. Smallwood got the economics to work to justify putting in fiber. What we want are more deals like that. Our fiber is helpful because a similar apartment complex outside the downtown area could do the same thing without having to put in miles of fiber on their own.
- u. There was some discussion on other communities that installed fiber to the home. Those communities tend to be smaller than Bloomington and have a municipally-owned electric utility.
- v. Charlie Webb asked about wireless technology. Would we want to create wireless hotspots and give out free Internet service in those areas? This would be one way of completing that last mile.
 - i. Goldman explained that that was recommended in downtown Evansville and in Rush County. But every community will be different.
 - ii. Volan questioned whether such a wireless solution would fit our community's strategic goals. That shows the need for a strategic planning study. We have general goals in our policies, but they're only general goals.
 - iii. Goldman stated that there are a lot of things that you can do with fiber, but the question is what should you do.
- w. Volan asked whether there was any reaction to the \$41,000 cost. He mentioned that there are funds in the Telecom Fund to cover the cost. The question is whether this is a good use of those funds. Goldman explained that the cost is 10% to 20% less than normal because of InfoComm's previous work with the City of Bloomington.
 - i. Dietz thought it would be good to have other entities such as the County participate in this study and to pay a portion of the cost, since that would make them invested in the project.
- x. The Committee wrapped up its discussion on the proposal, and agreed to discuss the proposal again at the September meeting.

The meeting was adjourned.

Minutes submitted by Gregory Volan, September 2, 2004.