

City of Bloomington: Bloomington Digital Underground Advisory Committee

Date of Record: April 8, 2004

Summary:

Bloomington Digital Underground Advisory Committee meeting held on Thursday, April 8th, 2004 at 4:00 pm in the Hooker Conference Room of City Hall at Showers, 401 N. Morton, Bloomington, Indiana.

Roll Call

Committee Members Present:

Rick Dietz, Indiana University
Mark McMath, Bloomington Hospital
Bruce Myers, Kiva
Dennis Morrison, Center for Behavioral Health
Brian Voss, Indiana University
Charlie Webb, CallNet

Committee Members Absent:

Linda Williamson, Bloomington Economic Development Corporation

Guests Present:

Jim Goldman, CTO, InfoComm Systems, Inc.
Brett Skilbred, InfoComm Systems, Inc.

Staff Present:

Gregory Volan, CIO, City of Bloomington
Rick Routon, User Support and Network Operations Manager, ITS, City of Bloomington
Heather Collins, Intern, ITS, City of Bloomington

Meeting was called to order by Greg Volan at 4:05 pm

I. Administrative Business

- a. Minutes from the March 25, 2004 meeting were reviewed and approved.

II. Presentation by InfoComm Systems

- a. Greg Volan introduced Jim Goldman and Brett Skilbred to the group.
- b. Jim Goldman began gave a brief history on InfoComm, which has been around since 1990 (incorporated in 2001) and is located in the Purdue Technology Park. The company offers consulting services to municipalities specifically in the areas of network strategy and development, network engineering, network research and security research.
 - i. Jim commented that InfoComm is in a unique position, as it is a vendor-neutral consulting entity and works as an advocate for the client. For example, in the past they have helped municipalities manage relationships with general contractors and guided them through the RFP process.
- c. Jim then discussed InfoComm's approach to strategic development, and about the tool they use to manage this process, MetroMorphosis™.
- d. Brett Skilbred and Jim offered details on several case studies: Shelby County, Greater Lafayette and Evansville.

- e. Shelby County case:
 - i. Many of Shelby County's goals for leveraging their fiber optic assets — economic development, advanced connectivity—are similar to Bloomington's. In addition, Shelby County established a Fiber Optic Board, similar to the BDU Advisory Committee.
 - ii. Interestingly, Shelby County also formed LightBound LLC, a single ISP made up of three companies that had been offering internet services within the County. LightBound, LLC leases fiber from Shelby County.
 - 1. Greg Volan asked whether there were other ISPs in the area who were opposed to creation of LightBound.
 - 2. Jim stated that the situation in Shelby County was somewhat unique: there was no opposition to creation of LightBound, and all parties believed that establishing it was a win-win situation for everyone.
- f. Greater Lafayette case:
 - i. First and foremost, greater Lafayette needed a long-term plan for improving their telecom infrastructure. This included establishing a fiber loop, a telecom hotel and a GIS. They also needed a strategy for obtaining investors in the project. Their planning resulted in Purdue Research Park, the City of Lafayette and Tippecanoe County all investing significantly in the project.
- g. Evansville case:
 - i. Evansville's primary objective was to use their existing fiber infrastructure to help revitalize the downtown area. They have developed a "Digital Downtown Enterprise Zone" in order to attract new businesses to Evansville.
- h. Jim also mentioned other cases in Noblesville and St. Joe County where cities decided to establish separate nonprofit organizations to manage their fiber assets.

III. Discussion

- a. The group raised some issues unique to the BDU with Jim and Brett.
 - i. Greg Volan mentioned that unlike in Shelby County, it has been difficult for Bloomington to get service providers to work together. He cited Bloomington Hospital's unsuccessful attempt to get multiple providers working together to address the Hospital's network needs.
 - 1. Jim Goldman said that it should be the responsibility of the Board to help establish an environment where providers can meet and talk openly (i.e. create a "Telecom TownHall").
 - ii. Charlie Webb raised the important issue that providers are not willing to share their fiber maps. How can we get providers to share information?
 - 1. Jim Goldman suggested having all parties sign a confidentiality/non-disclosure agreement. He also said that instead of trying to get information on exact locations of providers' fiber, we should ask whether providers have fiber in a given geographic area.
 - iii. Mark McMath noted that in order for Bloomington's ISPs to work together, they will need a chance to develop trust between each other and with the City. Furthermore, the City needs to ensure that from the outset, companies are fully aware of the tangible benefits of working together.

- iv. Greg Volan brought up that currently there are two business interested in leasing fiber from the City. Should we set prices and policies now and move ahead with this? What happens if we decided to transfer ownership of the fiber to another entity?
 - 1. Jim Goldman cited a case in South Bend where the University of Notre Dame needed additional fiber. The two parties established a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) so that South Bend could meet the university's needs with locking itself into a long term agreement.
- v. Greg also raised the issue whether it makes sense for the City to manage this asset ourselves or contract out to another entity.
 - 1. Jim Goldman believes that either way, some kind of management entity needs to be involved or created to manage the fiber infrastructure.
 - 2. The group asked what kind of infrastructure would be required if the City continues to manage the fiber network.
 - a. Jim said the City would at minimum need a help desk/support, and repair services.
 - 3. Jim also said that it is important for the City/BDU to assess its core competencies: does it really want to be a service provider?
- vi. Greg asked for recommendations for next steps, particularly since we have some timely issues at hand and may not be able to formulate a complete strategic plan.
 - 1. Jim stated that first, the BDU needs to answer some essential strategic questions: What business are you in? Do you want to be in this business? Where are the unmet needs in your environment?
 - 2. Jim also pointed out that leasing fiber to other parties does in fact seem to meet the goals of the BDU (connectivity, protecting City's right-of-way, economic development).

IV. Next Steps

- a. Greg said that the next course of action should be to meet with service providers in the community. The group also needs to move ahead with establishing a pricing structure, additional policies/requirements, and drafting a MOU, which can then be presented to City Council for approval.
- b. It was decided that service providers would be invited to the April 22, 2004 meeting.
- c. The group also agreed that it will be important to understand the service providers' long-term goals in order to come up with an effective pricing scheme. The pricing scheme needs to make both economic sense, and provide incentive for providers to use the City's fiber, not build their own.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:30 pm