



# CITY OF BLOOMINGTON

Information & Technology Services

## Bloomington Digital Underground BDUAC Meeting Memorandum

Per Executive Orders issued by the Governor, this meeting was conducted electronically.

### **Thursday, February 4th, 2021 4PM**

Location: Zoom

Facilitator: Rick Dietz

Board Attendance: Mike Allen, Marianne Chitwood, Chris Robb, Mike Sullivan, Mike Trotzke

Staff Attendance: Desiree King, Rick Dietz

### **Administrative Business & Updates**

Rick: Mayoral appointments went through at last Public Works meeting, still waiting on Council appointments. Allen will need to submit a new application

### **ITS Department Updates**

Rick: Trades Garage is a new building in the City ITS portfolio for support. City May have a staff member or two on site. The garage will also have a new data center, allowing for server and network gear consolidation from other sites like the Telecom Hotel.. City will maintain a presence at Telecom Hotel at 7th and Morton. PEG (Public Education and Government) is also housed at the Telecom Hotel. Rob Cronk (City Network and Security Administrator) and Rick discussed that the building is publicly owned. Smithville leases the space for the Telecom Hotel until 30 years after the garage has been built, then management reverts to the City. Will maintain small data centers at City Hall and Utilities Service Center.

Currently discussing plans for John Waldron Arts Center.

### **Digital Equity**

At this point, Rick acknowledged Pat East, member of the public present. Rick summarized the process that took place in 2020, which began with working with CTC, formulating a draft, presenting it in a public meeting, and ending with several recommendations featured in chapter 3.

- 3.1 Expand the City's newly created digital equity fund. Rick: This has been done; \$35,000 last year, \$50,000 available in 2021.
- 3.2 Convene a digital equity and inclusion coalition to guide implementation efforts  
Rick: Build on relationships established with organizations who could make substantive contributions.

- 3.3. Establish a Digital Equity creator position. Rick: Have a point of contact for digital equity issues, be on the ground assistance to help individuals meet connectivity issues.
- 3.4 Engage with local philanthropic organizations. Rick: This is a more generic recommendation, but aims to stay connected with not-for-profits.
- 3.5 Sponsor subscriptions to Internet Essentials and find other ways to remove barriers to adoption Rick: This would be an arrangement with local providers to subsidize internet access fees for individuals.
- 3.6 Partner with organizations to provide low-cost devices and training to City residents and to expand loaner programs Rick: Accomplished this somewhat with the Digital Equity grant by awarding money to the Monroe County Public Library to expand their loaner program.
- 3.7 Expand library-based training for seniors and study the evolving needs of library users
- 3.8 Establish digital skills training. Complements 3.7
- 3.9 Strengthen ties between Bloomington Housing Authority and organizations that offer training
- 3.10. On the City about how to connect with constituents as we update tech. Planning and HR went online.
- 3.11 Incentivize providers to go beyond what they currently offer. Explore feasibility with public broadband partnership. Considering targeted buildout for public housing. Feasibility of wi-fi downtown and in public parks.
- 3.12 Resource Guide

On grants, Sullivan asked about how we're tracking progress. Dietz said it's a quarterly check in, and will make sure funds are used entirely during the 2021 year. Based our agreements on similar grant agreements so they will follow a similar process.

Trotzke asked if grant funds will primarily drive these recommendations or who/how will these be implemented. Dietz said this is being determined now. The Foundation and the State and IU are interested in improving internet access for all. Dietz expects the City will continue to provide grant funds beyond 2021. Also recognize connectivity goes beyond City boundaries, partners needed. Having a Digital Equity specialist would also help implement these recommendations. Dietz, Trotzke, and Robb discussed how the recommendations should be prioritized, what is needed to accomplish, like the specialist position.

Sullivan said specialist could be a key player in accomplishing many of the recommendations, along with forming a coalition. Asked how this person would be found. Dietz would recommend the Community Foundation house this person, or using CARES Act funds to fund the position in ITS at the City. But may not be best as City position since County needs reached, too. Committee discussed that funding is the key. Forming a coalition might allow multiple organizations work together to fund this position. Robb said the FCC has started to recognize the digital divide as a real issue during COVID. Joann says not a lot of changes happening in next couple of months. Have emergency broadband program in place that needs to be expanded. Potential grant funds coming down pipe from FCC. Also expects rounds of federal stimulus to come to state and local governments. Dietz spoke with Blair Levin, staffer for Obama's broadband plan.

Dietz also monitoring multiple pieces of State legislation concerning broadband, how it might play out.

Trotzke: ROI good place to look.

Trotzke and Robb discussed organizing recommendations by low-level effort and low cost to more complex goals.

Dietz asked if any items IU would be interested in. Chitwood said IU would be interested in partnering on broadband expansion with the City. Also interested in public/private items, particularly with any funding that might come out of new administration.

Allen is looking at what items small businesses could help with.

Committee discussed that COVID has really shown that digital equity is a multidimensional problem. Better broadband is needed, but device access and skills training are needed for residents. Trotzke noted how difficult the COVID vaccination appointment process was for older family members.

### **Digital Equity Grants**

All five applicants in 2020 received funding. King said funds are in the process of being disbursed and she expects disbursement on Feb. 5th. Sullivan said the process went really smoothly and thinks it'll be interesting to see how the projects take shape. Dietz is looking forward to the 2021 process that will be able to award \$50,000 and hopes for even more applicants. He's not sure when that process will begin.

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

- Chitwood: New fiber route out of Indy to Chicago is coming along.
- Allen: If anyone has two separate networks (personal and guest) make sure both are secure.
- Trotzke: Doing one day version of Combine in April. Probably one session of presenters and one evening event.

Meeting adjourned

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