



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, December 2, 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

ITS Administrative Business & Updates

- End of Year agreements: Fiber use, PEG, and CATS funding: These will go before the BPW before the end of the year.
- Garages: ITS work has largely been completed here.
- Currently working with contractors to map the Bloomington Digital Underground and our manhole locations more precisely.
- Working on several projects that have emerged from the Mayor's Recover Forward initiative. Major project is to install wi-fi in several City parks. Some of the parks require more infrastructure buildout than the others. (List parks). Might have already been able to install wi-fi in People's Park, but supply chain issues are delaying our hardware orders.

City-wide Fiber Broadband Initiative

Meridiam Letter of Intent and press release

Began the year (2021) working with a group called Wyyerd. After they were bought, their target market definition changed, Bloomington was no longer a good fit for them. However, they connected us with one of their long-term partners, Meridiam. Ended up working out because Meridiam's goals line up better with the City's. Meridiam is a network infrastructure provider, not an internet service provider, but they contract with internet service providers (ISP).

In terms of working toward an agreement, the Letter of Intent is simply that, outlining significant areas of agreement and the work that has already been done. Whatever will happen will be determined in the master agreement and any contracts from Meridiam building the network and partnering with the ISP. Currently aiming to finalize a master agreement by end of January 2022. That being said, the partnership could still fall apart, although we've advanced farther than with previous partnerships. They are unlikely to be bought and change direction.

Has to partner with other communities to meet their investment threshold. Those communities are Columbus, Martinsville, and Shelbyville. We have shared the Letter of Intent with BDUAC and welcome any questions/comments. Meridiam may wish to use vacant City conduit, which would be covered in the master agreement and likely need to be reviewed by the Board of Public Works. The BDUAC committee is not required to review it but if the time comes we will likely be sharing it and asking for a recommendation to bring before the BPW.

- Chris: List of locations excluded from scope of project jumped out. Any location services by other providers would be passed over? Intention? Rick: Meridiam intends to fully build within the boundary, including annexed areas. They're not saying they won't build where the competition is, but it's their intent to fully build where they can.
 - Marianne: LOI expires at end of December. Renew? Rick: Already sent over an amendment that renews it for another month. Not a concern for either party.
 - Mike T.: Open access section doesn't specify timeline. Rick: Open ended in LOI, looking to pin down in master agreement. What has been discussed is Meridiam contracting with one ISP for an exclusive period of time and establish a market presence before it opens up.
 - Mike S.: How much network will be above/underground? Rick: Don't know yet, Axia's proposed network was 60/40 aerial to underground. Has been mention of microtrenching, but Meridiam sees it as a last resort. This is sort of underground, but not as deep and could potentially be disrupted by street issues.
 - Marianne: With a lot of limestone, better to hang on poles. Mike A: Inclement weather does affect lines on poles? Anything built in to handle this? Rick: Yes, this is factored in. Ideally you want to be underground as much as possible to avoid hazards. Committee discussed pros and cons of aerial and underground wire.
 - Chris: What is long-term commitment, clauses if they go out of business? Rick: Not well defined yet, but City interested in this and has been discussed with Meridiam. City is currently working on language.
 - Mike S.: Any estimates for end user costs? Probably won't be in master agreement? Rick: Won't be able to get to a precise price point because the ISP isn't part of the agreement.
 - Mike T.: Timeline on ISP selection? Rick: Not sure, Meridiam is currently working on contracts with an ISP but not sure if Meridiam will want to announce it. CTC consultant does speak highly of the potential ISP.
 - Mike S.: Letter of Intent address idea of digital equity. Where does the rubber hit the road? Rick: Hoping to have as much of digital equity agreement codified as possible but it may be a side agreement. Currently would involve City, Meridiam, and ISP, and one or more additional parties with an interest. Is an ambitious plan with a decent amount of internet speed, federally funded and would be provided for free to low-income residents.
 - Mike S.: Assuming everything comes together smoothly, what's the timeline for residents to get connected to this network. Rick: Might be a year to two years. Just depends on how ambitious Meridiam is to complete build out.
 - Mike T.: Any other projects similar to this Meridiam has underway? Rick: A few international projects, and one in the southern U.S. They are fairly new to the U.S. market but they seem to really feel that Bloomington is a good fit for them. Bloomington doesn't have a lot of other options for City-wide fiber broadband and Meridiam checks a lot of boxes, including open access. For instance, after an exclusive period, Smithville would be able to access the network anywhere in Bloomington without having to make the full capital investment.
- Rick welcomed any additional feedback on the Letter of Intent.

Digital Equity

ROI grant: Rick has been involved with a regional digital equity plan. Other counties have different issues than Bloomington and Monroe County, but it has been valuable to be a part of the conversation. We are hoping to receive funding through state's REDI program for a digital equity specialist. Would be a big step in improving the situation here.

Desiree updated.... Digital Equity Grants 2020 and 2021 award year updates

Member Reports (Items not on the agenda)

Mike A.: Will future meetings be in-person or hybrid? Rick: We don't know until we know. Depends on Governor's emergency order. Expect we'll meet virtually in January. There will be a hybrid option, but restrictions on how many times members can attend remotely and will need to have in-person quorums for any votes. Will keep everyone posted.

Meeting Adjourned

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