Broadband/Smart City Ad-Hoc Committee Regular Meeting Minutes

December 2, 2021 at 9:00 a.m.

City Hall Commission Chambers
401 S. Park Avenue ı Winter Park, Florida

Present:

Richard James, Chris Johnson Janelle Zurek, Paul Conway, Michael Poole (arrived at 9:06 a.m.), and James Everett (virtual). Absent: Wes Naylor.

Also Present

COO Courtney Violette, Magellan Advisors (virtual); Director of Information Technology Parsram Rajaram; Division Director of Budget and Performance Peter Moore; Director of Finance Wes Hamil and Recording Secretary Kim Breland.

Call to Order

Mr. Rajaram called the meeting to order at 9:02 a.m.

Consent Agenda

Approval of November 18, 2021, work session minutes. Approved by consensus.

Staff Updates

a. Smart City Portal

Public Comments (for items not on Agenda)

There was no public comment.

Non-Action Items

a. Discussion with Magellan Consultants.

Chief Operating Officer Courtney Violette of Magellan Advisors was present (virtually) to answer questions regarding the report created for the city in 2016. He stated that since the report was generated five years ago, a lot has changed considerably due to COVID, funding landscape, labor, material pricing, etc. He provided a history of the city's electric system underground effort that moved all the electric assets underground and explained that as a part of that project, there was an opportunity for the city to begin laying conduit to support a fiber optic telecom system throughout the city. He stated that Magellan was brought in to help determine the potential cost savings to the city if they were to deploy conduit and fiber at the same time they were undergrounding the rest of the electric assets.

Mr. Violette explained that he worked with Public Works and IT to identify the areas of the city planned to build out and provided a zone by zone forecast of the cost for the city to build a network from scratch vs. the cost savings alternative if the city put conduit in the trench with the same undergrounding effort. He added that other topics such as trends, case studies from cities in Florida and around the country were doing were included in the report. He stated that Magellan also outlined recommendations the city could utilize to not only make a case to build a network, but also to monetize parts of the network.

Regarding surveys, Mr. Violette stated that Magellan did generate two residential surveys. Both were considered by the city, but to his understanding, it was decided not to survey the community. He stated he did not recall why that decision was made but offered ideas for why a city might opt to not survey the community in the early stages of a project, such as not wanting to raise awareness of the project prematurely and setting expectations to take a particular action.

Discussion followed on the monetization of fiber strands, network architecture, backbone segment projects, connectivity, and processes. Further discussion was held on how many fibers the city will need over the next ten years.

Mr. Violette gave the committee an update on various projects Magellan is working on in different cities around the country. He stated that their consultant team is developing infrastructure plans as well as smart city plans across the country. Mr. Rajaram listed some of the smart projects the city has currently including AMI network, public wifi, parking project, environmental sensors, and building automation amongst others. Mr. Violette stated that the report from 2016 laid out a conduit network backbone with 288 strands and that's the process to take when building a master plan.

b. Discussion with Peter Moore – Current Fiber Contract

Mr. Moore provided the history of the electrical program and explained that when Director of Electric Utilities Dan D'Alessandro began working at the city, staff was able to get a process in place and begin the conduit deployment. He added that Mayor Leary supported the fiber effort which gave the city the political capital to be able to hire Magellan to create the report, which helped the city understand various business models around the word.

Mr. Moore explained the financial challenges the city faced with trying to build a fiber backbone. He stated that a fiber optics task force was created to generate political momentum, community awareness, and funding to move the project forward. He reviewed processes developed by the task force and discussed budget challenges during that time. He stated that the city met with different businesses to find a capital partner, but discovered that each business was deploying its own fiber. He stated that the city was seeking a financial partner that was willing to work and co-build with, which is how the agreement with Frog began.

Mr. Moore stated that the CEO of Frog Michael Voll is a Winter Park resident and business owner and the city was able to negotiate a deal to co-build a "backbone light", which is the contract that was approved last March by the city commission. He discussed parameters for the contract and explained that the contract execution is to be completed within 18 months. He added that 75% of all conduit to every location has been completed and remaining areas are expected to be completed by the end of March 2022. He added that the contract with Frog is a co-build agreement where they city saved on capital costs. He stated that the city wanted to connect its facilities, have sufficient bandwidth to achieve various goals from a smart city municipal context.

Mr. Moore discussed how different companies are navigating the push for 5g technology and its impacts to the city. He stated that he would like the committee to consider what the city should do the conduit that has been placed in the ground. He talked about monetizing fiber and lack of interest in government owned fiber. He stated that the Frog contract came with a maintenance agreement and explained that if the city has any break in the system, the city pays the repair on a pro-rata basis where the city considers the conduit 50/50 replacement cost, and considers the fiber strands on a strand basis. He discussed the benefits with working with Frog as a local company and shared how wifi was implemented in central park and shady park during the pandemic. He noted that the positive response from the implementation allowed the city to extend wifi across park avenue resulting in all of the downtown corridor having free wifi. He discussed technology being used by the Planning & Transportation to provide smart streetlights throughout the city. He added that the commission has $1million allocated for smarty city and transportation related issues and noted that the commission is very interested in how a smart city can help with transportation issues.

Discussion followed on conduit capacity, franchise tax/ monetizing tax on services, monetizing the city conduit, 5g nodes in the city, the potential need for an RFP to allow the conduit to be used; potential for city owned broadband service vs. private network, and leasing city conduit to recover costs. Mr. Poole suggested staff reach out to other municipalities around the state to understand the economics and competitive issues, if any, for their cities. Mr. Rajaram will reach out to the City of Lakeland. Further discussion followed on cities around the state and country that are building their own systems, having the committee meet with Magellan to discuss business models, community surveys to determine community desire for different broadband services, and broadband and fiber access for businesses and residential areas throughout the city.

c. Public Involvement Document Feedback

Discussion was held on processes to define the committee’s mission statement and when to include community input. Mr. Conway suggested having a public portal focused on education and what a “smart city” is and a survey to gain feedback on how to prioritize efforts across public safety. He stated that the portal should have a scorecard for each of the functional areas of the city to describe what efforts have been implemented and what is being worked on. Ms. Zurek added that this framework was consistent with the outline City of Orlando used, discussion ensued.

Action Items

a. Mission and Vision statement.

Discussion was held on the purpose of the committee and parameters of the vision statement, regulations impeding the city from becoming an internet service provider, business model, competitive advantage, and the city owning its own fiber. Further discussion was held on the different types of smart projects being used for traffic, different technologies being used, integration and consolidation.

Michael Poole left the meeting at 10:29 am

The members reviewed the purpose of the committee located in Section 2 of the ordinance to define aspects of the mission statement. After discussion, Ms. Zurek will review and create a draft mission statement for the committee to review at the next meeting.

Board Comments

None.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 11:07 a.m.

Respectfully,

Kim Breland

Recording Secretary

Minutes approved the board on 01/07/2022.
/s/ Kim Beland