



Environmental Quality & Public Works Committee

February 1, 2022

Summary and Motions

Chair F. Brown called the meeting to order at 1:01 p.m. Committee Members Kay, Ellinger, Moloney, McCurn, LeGris, Sheehan, Kloiber, and Bledsoe were present. Committee Member Worley was absent. Council Members Reynolds and Plomin were also present as a non-voting members.

I. Approval of December 7, 2021 Committee Summary

Motion by McCurn to approve the December 7, 2021 Environmental Quality & Public Works Committee Summary. Seconded by Sheehan. Motion passed without dissent.

II. Fayette County Broadband Update

Aldona Valicenti, Chief Information Officer, provided an update on the Fayette County Broadband Report which LFUCG originally commissioned from Columbia Telecommunications Corporation (CTC) in 2017. She reviewed key findings from this report which showed that the primary challenge is low population density and the necessary investment. She said most of Fayette County has some form of connection, but there are underserved areas as well as unserved areas. She provided a summary of the findings from the CTC update and said there are broadband opportunities through state and federal funding. She reviewed the recommendation for a regional approach which looks at six of the surrounding counties. She said this would include building a regional collaborative to address digital inclusion and equity and she described the advantages and disadvantages of doing this on a regional level. Next steps would be to issue a regional broadband RFP, establish a broadband oversight office, and establish a jurisdictional RFP evaluation committee.

Plomin spoke about how this is a real issue in the rural area because since the onset of the pandemic, more people have been connecting remotely for work, virtual meetings, virtual school, and online shopping. This issue affects the productivity of the entire city and county so it is crucial to have this resolved and she asked how long a build-out would take. Valicenti explained that it would be a multi-year project which would include permitting, engineering design, digging, and placing poles. She stressed that it is important to keep in mind the labor shortages and issues with supply and demand. Plomin asked who would respond to the RFP and Valicenti thinks all of the present providers would respond. She explained that doing this in rural areas is more difficult than in the city, but she is hopeful that companies who have done this sort of work in other cities would be able to come here. Plomin and Valicenti discussed how Council could support this and Valicenti said it is important to have the constant reinforcement that this is something needed to make our community economically viable.

Kloiber and Valicenti discussed whether there is overlap with unserved and underserved areas which have utilities such as water and sewer as opposed to the unserved or underserved areas with no utilities and Valicenti explained that a map would show where the (utility) lines are and this is part of what Engineering does when they start to build. Kloiber spoke about Starlink and said speeds are faster than the 100 mbps in rural areas without the broadband infrastructure. His concern is that we were slow to put emphasis on broadband in Lexington and over \$40M in federal money has been spent on rural infrastructure in the last 10 years. New technology such as Starlink seems poised to solve the problem of not needing to put in the rural infrastructure in order to get broadband to these areas and he questions going into areas and placing

utilities when we don't have the other utilities such as water and sewer. He asked if there was a way to gauge this in our process moving forward before getting in too far and spending too much. Valicenti explained that Starlink relies on satellite and they are unsure how many satellites will be needed. Starlink sits slightly lower than a satellite and the uncertainty is whether enough of these can be put in the sky to cover the area without causing traffic jams and she added that doing this could also be costly.

McCurn agrees with finding new opportunities but would like to embrace what we have. He asked about the RFP and if there is an opportunity for another vendor to respond. Valicenti said fiber underground is important and fixed wireless is also important so it will be interesting to see who responds. She said every state is looking at rural areas and she said 5G only covers big cities in large areas, but not necessarily in rural areas.

Moloney and Valicenti discussed 5G impacts to the airport area and Valicenti said 5G is governed by FCC and she agreed that interference with communications at the airport are a concern.

No further comment or action was taken on this item.

III. Home Compost Pilot Report

Angela Poe with Environmental Services said the goal of the Home Compost Pilot Program was to offer an alternative for disposal of organic matter and this program provides people interested in at-home composting with an opportunity to do so. She provided an overview of the pilot program and said there were three workshops in September, October, and November that were facilitated by Seedleaf. Demonstrations were held at McConnell Springs and allowed for a maximum of 60 households or an average of 20 per workshop. She said in the end, a total of 45 households participated with a total of 64 participants. The pre-workshop survey showed that 22 households were already composting and the message was received from social media, newsletter, friends/family, ads, etc. She reviewed survey results and showed how those changed from before the workshop to after the workshop as an indicator for how the workshop educated people. From the post-workshop evaluation, Poe said most people showed interest in composting and were confident in their ability to do composting at home. Moving forward, she said, they would offer 3 workshops a year and move one of the workshop to winter. They would continue to use Seedleaf for facilitating the program and increase the cap of households from 20 to 30-35 with a more deliberate promotion of the program. She closed by reviewing the budget for each workshop and the total program budget which includes 3 workshops and promotion.

Reynolds and Poe discussed reaching more people who might have an interest in the program. Poe feels there is an interest but she is unsure what the level of interest is. Reynolds would like to look for ways to expand the outreach.

Sheehan spoke about the challenge with the supply chain and wondered if there is a voucher that might be available for people to submit for use with a local vendor to get a bin and do this on their own. Poe said one reason we couldn't do this was how much time it would take when trying to roll out a pilot in a short timeframe. LeGris said she is supportive of a voucher that would allow people to work with local businesses and we can look into this. She also wants to look into scaling this for more interest.

No further comment or action was taken on this item.

IV. Division and Program Review – 2022 Evaluations Selection

On behalf of the committee, Chair Brown and Vice-Chair McCurn selected Streets and Roads and Traffic Engineering for evaluations in 2022.

No action was taken on this item.

V. Items Referred to Committee

No action was taken on this item.

Motion by Bledsoe to adjourn at 2:27 p.m. Seconded by Ellinger. Motion passed without dissent.