

**CHAMPAIGN-URBANA CABLE TELEVISION AND
TELECOMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
STUDY SESSION
MINUTES**

DATE: October 10, 2007
4:00 p.m.

PLACE: Champaign City Council Chambers
102 N. Neil Street, Champaign, IL

MEMBERS PRESENT:	CHAMPAIGN	URBANA
	Rick Atterberry Karen Walker	Barbara Gladney Durl Kruse Peter Resnick Danielle Chynoweth

PARKLAND	U of I
Tom McDonnell	Stan Yagi

MEMBERS ABSENT: Giraldo Rosales, Ken Pirok

STAFF PRESENT: Jeff Hamilton - City of Champaign
Bill DeJarnette – City of Urbana

OTHERS: Dan Meredith, Josh King – C-U Wireless Internet (CU-WIN)

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Atterberry called the meeting to order at 4:02 p.m.

Chair Atterberry introduced Commissioners Resnick and Chynoweth as leaders of today's topic: "Trends in Municipal Involvement in Broadband Access."

Trends in Municipal Involvement in Broadband Access

Commissioner Chynoweth shared two handouts with the Commission - "Localizing the Internet" and "Our Vision of the Information Society." She defined "broadband" as a way of transmitting large amounts of media (data, voice, and video) simultaneously. She stated that the Cable Commission has a duty to monitor telecommunications issues and inform the public of changes and encourage public/private cooperative relationships. Currently there is no local policy discussion on broadband in our community. Big, Small, All has a goal that Champaign County develop our technology infrastructure to place it among the nation's leaders. Thus far, no initiatives have been made to further that goal.

Commissioner Resnick stated that the Cities do public works projects everyday and build public infrastructure like streets and roads. These projects include clear rules over who does what - public vs. private. Cities typically stay away from telecom issues because of FCC regulations. The Internet is a little different. City IT departments think about ways to provide service to city users, but not directly to the public. He said that city IT departments should watch for opportunities to provide broadband access to the public. He stated that the Cable Commission should advise the Councils on broadband policy and they should also encourage the Cities to provide access to public hot spots or provide whole community access.

Commissioner Chynoweth explained broadband is the “electricity of the 21st century” and is relied upon by the public. She explained that the “Our Vision of the Information Society” handout discusses communications rights. She said this is a basic human need and the foundation of all social organization. She stated lack of broadband access means lack of access to the basic tools of literacy. She said studies show communities with broadband access do better than those without and a lack of federal policy regarding broadband has led to slower speeds and higher prices for consumers. She said that broadband issues are part of long range planning and will take time to develop.

Commissioner Resnick provided a technical overview of how broadband works, including DSL, cable modems, satellite and microwave. He explained that Internet service providers are largely unregulated, in contrast to the telephone network. He also explained Tier 1-3 providers and how they operate and interconnect. He said that architecturally, there’s no difference between connecting to the world and being an end user. The Cities currently manage intranets and provide services for city staff and affiliates only. Cities could provide other users with access. He discussed wired vs. wireless broadband, the difference in “speed” and “capacity,” and explained that consumer upstream speeds are much slower than downstream. He stated that we have local ISP’s that provide access to most broadband users in town. We also have Illinois Century Network (ICN) access operated by the State of Illinois. The Cities pay local telephone companies to connect their networks to the ICN. Cities can’t resell ICN access, but can share it publicly for free. The City of Urbana now provides some hot spots for public use.

Bill DeJarnette stated the Cities of Urbana and Champaign, Champaign County, and other agencies are actively discussing interconnectivity. He said that Urbana and Champaign County are connected to each other, but not to Champaign. He said the County is working to build redundant fiber connections for their own intranet. Urbana is looking at ways to connect to Champaign using various telecom providers or building their own infrastructure.

Jeff Hamilton summarized the City of Champaign’s Networking Communications planning process and stated that Champaign and Urbana have a need to interconnect their networks for sharing of GIS data and other information. He said that Champaign also needs to interconnect its City facilities (including Public Works, Fire Stations, and Library) with high-speed connections. Champaign has hired a consultant to help develop a Master Plan to interconnect their facilities. This Master Plan could include leased or City-owned fiber or wireless infrastructure. He stated that Champaign has also met with local government agencies to look at possible joint ventures and cost-sharing.

Commissioner Resnick stated that the Cities will be putting in infrastructure to interconnect themselves and should consider capacity for other (public) users too. He stated that CU-WIN is a grassroots community group that is working on developing a house-to-house wireless network.

Mr. DeJarnette stated Urbana is working with CU-WIN and considering use of City fiber or communications towers to help move CU-WIN access around town.

Commissioner Resnick stated they could also consider providing internet access via ICN.

Commissioner Chynoweth stated the Commission needs to be better educated about broadband and assist in setting up broadband access goals. There are lots of different ways of owning and operating these networks (private, municipal, cooperative, non-profit, community, hybrid).

Commissioner Chynoweth proposed that the Commission and the City IT departments should work together to develop goals and a vision for broadband access in Champaign-Urbana. She proposed creating a Broadband Access Task Force (a Committee of the Commission) to work on this issue.

Public Participation

Dan Meredith (CU-WIN) said he was glad both cities were working together on this issue and encourages a good, high capacity backbone, built by the cities. He also said CU-WIN (and other ISPs) could then interconnect residents wirelessly.

Josh King (CU-WIN) stated CU-WIN brings the “internet cloud” down to the community network, so it doesn’t have to hop out of town and back like current Internet connections. This improves performance for everyone.

Commissioner Comments

Commissioner Walker asked at what point commercial providers object to municipal involvement in providing broadband access. Commissioner Resnick replied that when two users are just connecting with each other, the commercial providers shouldn’t care, but there have been lawsuits when it grows to a size that affects private business. He stated there is nothing to prevent this, but expect industry lobbying against it. Commissioner Chynoweth stated some hybrid models have the municipality running the backbone, but ISPs providing customer service. She suggested we start by focusing on the community’s need.

Commissioner McDonnell stated wireless technologies can interfere with one another and asked if there were any conflicts? Commissioner Resnick replied that CU-WIN uses 802.11 wireless (wi-fi) protocols, which Mr. King confirmed. Interference is not a problem.

Commissioner Yagi stated the broadband policy issues need to be answered first. Commissioner Resnick stated that both Cities and the University of Illinois (UI) need to be involved.

Commissioner Yagi stated local peering is important, but the UI hasn’t had luck peering AT&T and Insight. He said the City Fiber Optic backbone is key to keeping costs down. He also said security and privacy is a concern with wi-fi and people may not realize it. He reported that the last mile is also critical. He doesn’t expect we’ll wire the last mile and that perhaps wireless may be the way to go there. He reiterated the need to involve the UI and other local communities.

Chair Atterberry stated last week's NATOA Conference also discussed the need for a federal broadband policy.

Commissioner McDonnell reported that Parkland is the number one online course provider among state community colleges, but many students come to the Parkland computer labs to take online courses because they lack broadband access at home.

Commissioner Kruse asked if we can bring the local groups and non-profit users together to begin these discussions. He thinks the Commission's Task Force should include community leaders as well. Commissioner Gladney stated that the Public Access Study Committee involved a cross section of our community.

Chair Atterberry asked Jeff Hamilton to add the Task Force issue to the next quarterly meeting agenda.

Commissioner Chynoweth encouraged the Commissioners to develop a list of potential members for the new task force. She stated that the Commission should provide the Councils with more information on broadband issues.

Commissioner Yagi asked if there discussions of creating a fiber backbone across Champaign-Urbana. Mr. DeJarnette stated that a private group is discussing building a fiber ring around the community. He stated that Urbana will soon release an RFP to install fiber from Urbana City Hall to the Urbana Library. Mr. Yagi stated that the Commission should have some discussions with that group.

Chair Atterberry stated he understands a lot of fiber was installed in the last five years, but is unused. Mr. DeJarnette stated that McLeod laid a lot of fiber that isn't heavily used. But how do you get at it and what is the cost? The Cities have to evaluate whether it is cost effective to lease or install a City-owned fiber networks.

Commissioner Yagi pointed out that the handouts showed examples of where fiber installs were cooperatively installed for a shared goal. These were usually more successful. Mr. DeJarnette said Urbana coordinated their fiber install with boring for street lighting. This was very cost effective.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 5:39 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jeff Hamilton
Telecommunications AV Technician
City of Champaign