



INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY ADVISORY COMMISSION

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January 3, 2008

The Honorable Jay Fisette
Arlington County Board
2100 Clarendon Blvd., Suite 300
Arlington, VA 22201

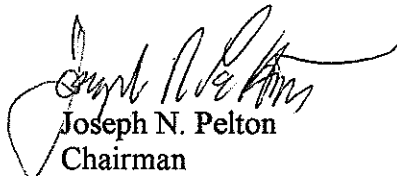
Cc: Ron Carlee, County Manager
Walter McKenzie, Arlington Public Schools
Arlington County School Board

Dear Jay,

Attached is the report of the IT Advisory Commission that summarizes activities of the past year and highlights certain policy issues that we would like to bring to the attention of the County Board. Text that is in bold highlights areas where County Board action may be appropriate. The Commission feels that IT technology in its various forms is key to services to citizens and business as well as to an efficiently run County Government.

Happy New Year. Thanks for the opportunity to be of service in 2007. We look forward to important new progress in 2008.

Best wishes on behalf of the Commission,


Joseph N. Pelton
Chairman



**Arlington County
Information Technology Advisory Commission**

Annual Report to the County Board

2007

Issued: January 3, 2008

The Information Technology Advisory Commission, during this past year, has worked with the County Board to update and broaden its terms of reference, has recruited new members that broadened its range of inputs, and has expanded and updated the Commission's web site to expand the information presented to the community. The following report indicates areas that the Commission has addressed. Text in bold represent areas where we feel action by the County Board, the County Manager, the Department of Technology Services and/or the Commission is required. We would commend the staff of DTS and particularly Jack Belcher, Denise Hart and Rob Billingsley for their support and competence over the past year.

1. Progress in providing Broadband service to Shirlington

The IT Advisory Commission, members of the County Board and County Staff have undertaken sustained efforts to provide broadband service to the expanded Shirlington Business community. Efforts have now found viable access to conduit to serve at least a part of the tract. The realty firm serving a key part of the tract, however, has been reluctant to provide access to utility conduits. The IT Advisory Commission urges that efforts continue and that County staff work diligently through all legitimate means at its disposal to gain the constructive support of the realty management firm.

Recommendation: On-going reports should be given to the County Manager until these issues are all resolved.

2 Wi-Fi services for Arlington

The County Board approved a non-exclusive contract with Earthlink in early 2007. This contract was supported by the IT Advisory Commission because: (i) it did not require the County to commit to this service as an anchor tenant, (ii) it included an annual payment to Arlington County of \$40K, and (iii) such a system would offer new service options to Arlington citizens and business, and also could be used by the County government and the school system to provide key services and emergency communications services. As of July 31, 2007 Earthlink reported net losses for the quarter of nearly \$14 million. Its President and CEO on that occasion announced that "EarthLink now plans to ask cities that want municipal networks to sign up as anchor tenants, committing themselves to buying services for their own operations."

Recommendation: The County staff and the Commission believe that no such financial commitments would be desirable. Instead it is believed that the County should: (a) await to see if Earthlink will withdraw from its agreements to the County and at the same time (b) actively explore whether one or more other commercial providers might offer such Wi-Fi or Wi-Max service in the Arlington Community that meets County needs as well as those of Arlington citizens and businesses.

3. Strategic Planning for County IT services. (Updated Phase II Report)

The IT Advisory Commission has requested that an update be undertaken to the Phase II strategic plan for Arlington County IT services. This update will cover such aspects as IT services and applications that support the Fresh AIRE (Arlington Initiative for Reduction of Emissions Program. This revised plan will highlight how improved IT practices, telecommuting and conservation practices related to information services can perhaps make the greatest contribution to energy savings and enhanced environmental practices. A new emphasis on an Arlington County government telecommuting program offers the prospect of very substantial energy saving and positive environmental impact.

Recommendation: Conservation practices implemented via IT services and new DTS conservation guidelines can lead to very substantial energy and environmental savings that greatly outstrip gains made via the Fresh AIRE program to date. The Commission sees a strategic need for the E-Government Master Plan to allow the County Government to plan for “intellectual infrastructure”, in addition to physical infrastructure, as Arlington adjusts to 21st Century needs. Thus the ITAC Commission believes that the updated Phase II plan should readdress the substantial under funding of IT related capital improvements that would aid governmental efficiencies, create better centralized control and management over IT systems, greatly enhance the future implementation the Fresh AIRE program, support expanded telework programs, and improved County emergency services. The ITAC Commission has created a subcommittee headed by Vice Chairman Ken Bell to work on these issues.

4. Cable Television Service-Concerns and Issues

A proposed new provider of Cable Television service in Arlington, namely “Cavalier” is in now in immediate prospect and will be the subject of Commission hearings and County Board action in January 2008. Stronger cable television and broadband Internet competition should help reduce the price of service and allow consumers options they currently lack. The build out by Verizon of the FIOS system to provide cable television services, broadband Internet, and telephone service continues within the timetable specified by the franchise agreement. Nevertheless many citizens and businesses, especially in South Arlington are quite impatient to have access to competitive service options.

Verizon is also meeting specified deadlines for PEG (Public, Educational, Governmental) access deadlines with access via new pedestal design now providing a solution to problems that arose in the Fall of 2007.. In the case of Comcast, there have been a number of citizens that have appeared before the Commission or written letters bitterly complaining about billing practices, telephone service problems, and filtering of broadband data service. The complaint process contracted to Columbia Communications via DTS appears to be working reasonably well.

Recommendation: Effort in the area of cable television should include Board action with regard to the Cavalier cable television franchise, the encouragement of Verizon to complete the FIOS build-out ahead of schedule to the extent possible, and a request to the County Manager (via DTS) to continue to closely monitor the performance of cable television providers within the context of their franchise agreements.

5. Arlington County Government Cable Television Services

'Arlington's Public Access cable channel, Arlington Independent Media (AIM), has now won multiple national awards as the best public access channel in the country. The Arlington County Government's cable channel, namely Arlington Virginia Network (AVN), continues to expand its coverage of county events and its coverage of County Board meetings has been improved with the addition of an audio text caption display that can be searched by key words to allow the public to find specific Board discussions. Together, these public cable television channels provide a wide and diverse range of services, a community calendar of events, and many other amenities and services to the public.

Recommendation: Support for these important community information mechanisms should be continued. AVN coverage might be usefully expanded to cover key County advisory commission meetings. In view of the growing volume of past AVN broadcasts, consideration should also be given to expanding the AVN staff to include a part-time archivist/librarian so that programs documenting significant County milestones can be adequately preserved and made available for occasional rebroadcast.

6. Emergency Communications

Since the tragic events of 9-11, Arlington County has made substantial strides in improving its ability to both mobilize itself and provide warning and emergency information to its citizens. These improvements related to IT service include the establishment of a well planned, state of the art 9000 sq. ft. Emergency Communications Center that will come on line in early 2008 as well as the existing Emergency Communications Center in the Court Square West building that will serve as a training and back up facility. In addition the County has implemented improved 911 services, telephone and Internet warning dissemination systems for the public; a county-owned low-power AM radio transmitter; an outdoor voice warning capability; and formal arrangements with local radio amateurs have all contributed to improving the emergency preparedness posture of the County. The elimination of "codes" that can create confusion among different emergency service providers is yet another desirable achievement. The county police and fire forces also have a mobile emergency command system as well as the ability to transfer its emergency communications and command services to another county facility by transfer of its 911 calls such as a school or fire station as prearranged with Verizon.

It is not clear to the Commission, that emergency telecommunications and IT plans effectively involve of all relevant Arlington County activities, among them the Arlington County Schools and Arlington Virginia Network CATV facilities and all of the existing and planned cable television systems and wireless/wi-fi/wi-max service providers. The current system for the control of traffic light systems for the Country is not presently backed up by an alternative carrier system. Finally there are concerns about the planning for government wireless emergency communications systems and in particular a number of issues with regard to planning for the new 700 MHz radio system and the most effective strategy for use of satellite telephone transceivers in the event of wireless and terrestrial telephone service being lost. This is not only a matter of equipment, facilities, backup power, etc. but also effective training for emergency conditions on the part of first responders and emergency managers.

Recommendation: The Commission believes that there are a number of issues related to Emergency telecommunication and IT services that deserve further study, evaluation, planning and future implementation. These issues include: (a) adequacy of the redundancy in the communications and backup of emergency communications facilities currently provided by Verizon; (b) the need for greater geographic diversity in the location of the Emergency Communications Services beyond the Court House area; (c) the adequacy of the interconnection and redundancy of connection between the County's ECC system and the County Schools, hospitals, AVN cable television system, the various

cable television systems, traffic light control system, and national emergency communications systems as provided by the Dept. of Homeland Security, the Pentagon/DOD, etc. (d) the need for greater connectivity to the Court House and other County facilities to accommodate extended telework operations in the event of a disaster, (e) the need for more training of first responders and emergency managers under realistic simulated crisis conditions (this concern is highlighted since the lack of training, clear credentials for first responders, and such, was identified as the number one problem after key disasters like Katrina have occurred) and (f) the need for further study of the 700 MHz emergency radio communications proposals that will call for County Board action in 2008. To this end the IT Advisory Commission has established a subcommittee to work with the Department of Technology Services and other parts of the County Government as appropriate to identify recommendations on these and related subjects as well as to comment on the revised E-Government Master Plan in the context of emergency services.

7. Coordination and liaison with the School system.

The School system has new people planning and implementing its IT system. There have now been new and effective discussions with regard to coordinating School and County IT services. These can and will lead to efforts to integrate services where possible to achieve cost reductions, better back up practices, and more effective and rapid response to emergency conditions.. In many areas that range from WiFi services, to data storage and emergency recovery, compliance to federal regulations, etc. more extensive and effective coordination and integration of effort between Arlington County and Schools can be achieved.

Recommendation: It is felt that such enhanced coordination and efficiency gains with respect to Arlington County Government and the School System should be monitored and progress reported in 2008.

8. IT Services for the Constitutional Officers

DTS has implemented a new integrated software and computer system that will serve the Constitutional Offices and the Arlington County Government on an integrated and seamless basis with regard to data storage and retrieval, future upgrades, and efficient information services and database protection. It is believed that this new system will reduce costs, reduce the cost of future upgrades of equipment, services and operating costs and provide effective procedures for the off site storage and protection of critical data.

Recommendation: This initiative to support the Constitutional Officers is strongly endorsed.

9. ITAC Terms of Reference & Updated and Expanded Web Site

The terms of reference of the Information Technology Advisory Commission has been updated and expanded this past year to include not only cable television, but many other topics such as emergency communications, improved IT services, wireless communications services, and efficiency of operation.

The ITAC Web site that is available to support the work of the Information Technology Advisory Commission has been upgraded and expanded to reflect these new duties and responsibilities and to offer citizens and business advice in these areas.

10. Arlington's Image as a "Clean and Smart Community"-Telecommuting et al

Arlington County has won a series of awards for its effective deployment and use of advanced telecommunications services to provide services to the Arlington Community and it is believed that current planning efforts will lead to future recognition on not only a national, but perhaps ultimately on an

international scale. In this case best practices not only lead to recognition and improved services, but in many cases can lead to reduced costs, energy savings and other benefits. In terms of future planning we feel that efforts in such areas as telecommuting, IT efficiencies, and “smart homes and buildings” can make Arlington a better, cleaner, and more attractive place to live and work. We are seeking to work with the County Board, the Committee of 100, the Civic Federation, the Chamber of Commerce, Leadership Arlington and others to interact with the Arlington Community in terms of getting their input on these ideas, informing the community of new opportunities in the IT and “smart energy” arenas.

Recommendation: We feel that these IT-related efforts stemming from DTS and the Fresh AIRE programs plus various community meetings on this subject will lead to broader recognition of Arlington as being “Clean, Green and Smart”. Such initiatives can lead to Arlington being seen as a model for counties and cities elsewhere and to attract clean industry and research institutes to the County. We would like to continue to work to support the Fresh AIRE’s initiative in 2008 through a subcommittee established for this purpose