

**JANUARY 2025 MEETING MINUTES OF THE
ARLINGTON COUNTY TECH COMMISSION (ITAC)**

JANUARY 22, 2025

The **TECH COMMISSION** convened its meeting at 7:30 p.m. on Wednesday, January 22, 2025.

The meeting was hybrid with the following Commissioners in attendance:

John Burke
Jacqueline Snelling
Jonathan Adelstein
Andrea L Wingo
Prescott Burden
Gary Thayer
Frank Jazzo
Michael Cornfield
Laura Gross

Staff members in attendance:

Holly Hartel, DTS
Laura Szlavin, DTS
Jeff Taylor, DTS

SUMMARY OF PRESENTATIONS/DISCUSSIONS

- **Meeting Minutes:** John mentioned that Tracey, their liaison, was able to take the transcript from the December meeting and use AI to generate meeting minutes. This method was successful, and Tracey offered to continue this service for future meetings. John highly recommended the AI-generated meeting minutes service for the county to provide to all commissions going forward. He hinted that this might be included in his board budget work recommendation comments. As a temporary backup to ensure accuracy, John asked Prescott to take minutes for the meeting. John then led the adoption of the December meeting minutes, with a brief discussion on incorporating legislative reports as separate artifacts. The minutes were adopted without opposition.
- **Chair's Update:** John provided the following updates.
 - *Vice chair introduction:* John announced that Mike is now the vice chair and joined him for meetings with their board liaison. Maureen Coffee will remain the board liaison for the commission for the coming year.
 - *Budget priorities:* John mentioned that the budget situation will be tight again, and the commission will make recommendations accordingly. They have been invited to a meeting with the county manager in February to initiate budget consultations with the commissions.
 - *Upcoming work:* John outlined the upcoming work, including drafting a letter with recommendations and participating in the DTS work session, likely in March. This will be the focus of their work for the next few meetings.
- **Broadband Commission Report:** John introduced Holly Hartell, acting CIO, and Jeff Taylor, Division Chief for Infrastructure and Operations, to provide an update on the Broadband Commission's recommendations and the Connect Arlington program.

- Jeff Taylor began with a brief overview of the successes of the Connect Arlington program, which included:
 - A \$3.5 million Indefeasible Right of Use (IRU) with JBG Smith
 - High-speed connectivity for Arlington Free Clinic
 - Fiber use by Marymount University
 - Cost savings for Arlington County Government (ACG) and Arlington Public Schools (APS).
- Jeff then acknowledged some of the mixed success, despite significant staff effort, in finding demand for dark fiber and the discovery that the recommendations of the BAC did not always pan out as expected. The group then discussed:
 - **Licensing agreement complexity:** John noted that one of the Broadband Commission recommendations concluded that one of the barriers to dark fiber use was the complexity of the licensing agreement, and he asked if we have solved that problem. Jeff and Holly shared that the licensing agreement is subject to legal review and is currently what ACG attorneys are comfortable with, however they have seen some flexibility with a willingness to adjust in some cases.
 - **Limited demand:** Jim inquired as to whether DTS believes there is untapped demand out there. Holly emphasized that Arlington is a fiber-rich area. Despite efforts to encourage use, there has been little interest from potential licensees.
 - **Future asset:** Holly and Jeff highlighted the importance of maintaining the dark fiber as a future asset. They noted that while selling it could recover some funds, keeping it could provide significant benefits in the long term for currently unknown needs, with minimal maintenance costs.
- Jeff then provided a brief overview of the types of fiber connecting ACG and APS, compared to other fiber included in Connect Arlington.
- John inquired about whether there was conversation about providing service to one of the largest affordable housing areas in the County, Barcroft Apartments. Holly confirmed that was offered to the developer, but due to the presence of two existing providers in that area – Comcast and Verizon – the developer was not interested.
- Jeff added that DTS continues to look for opportunities to add value as Connect Arlington is expanded to new sites, and one of those opportunities has been free outdoor Wi-Fi when feasible and appropriate. He noted that DTS will continue to look for those opportunities.
- **Legislative Update:** Frank provided a legislative update, including changes in the FCC leadership, new legislation in Virginia, and recent actions by the FCC. He also mentioned the new chair of the House Energy and Commerce Committee.
- **DTS Update:** Holly provided an update to remind the group that she is in an Acting CIO role since the departure of Norron Lee in December. The recruitment for CIO closed on Friday and applications are under review.
- **AI Use in the County:** Jackie mentioned that she has been in conversation with the Board Chair, and he has expressed some concern about the use of AI in the organization from a cybersecurity perspective. Jackie inquired as to whether DTS has been asked to investigate this.
 - Holly assured that the county is paying attention to policy, security, and ethical considerations in their exploration of AI applications. They are moving cautiously to ensure that any implementation does not put people at risk.

- Holly mentioned that the county is looking at AI from a use case perspective, focusing on what will benefit the public and improve internal efficiencies. They are considering the potential value and challenges of AI in various applications.
- Jackie highlighted the potential use of AI for improving transparency and expediting FOIA requests. Holly acknowledged the concerns and mentioned that they are working on ensuring that any AI implementation aligns with their policies and ethical standards.
- Jackie requested, and John agreed, that DTS provide a briefing on AI and schedule that when it's appropriate with DTS.
- **Close:** John reminded everyone that we are in budget season and asked the Commissioners to review the relevant documents. He mentioned that the Manager has estimated a \$30-\$40 million shortfall that needs to be addressed. John said the Commission will need to begin working on recommendations in February to make sure they are finalized before the work session with DTS.
 - Jackie requested a future update on the work being done around the single sign-on initiative.
 - Jackie informed the Commission about the upcoming Civic Federation work session with the board, highlighting transparency and access to data as key topics for discussion.
 - John asked for a motion to adjourn that was moved and seconded.

MOTIONS & ACTIONS/VOTES

Minutes Adoption: John called for a motion to adopt the December minutes. Gary moved to adopt, and Frank seconded. John confirmed the quorum and conducted the vote, with all members present voting in favor. The minutes were legally adopted.

Meeting adjourned at 8:10 p.m.