

Technology & Communications Commission
MINUTES
June 6, 2023

Commission Members Present: Richard Jackson, Vice Chair
Aaron Nadler
Katherine Johnson (Electronic Participation)
Chris Grandjean
Rob Fulcer

Absent John Binkley, Chair
Brandon Garay

Council Liaison Present: Neil Steinberg

Staff Present: John Callahan
Diana Witek

1. Call to Order 7:00PM
2. Establish Quorum
 - a. Quorum present.
3. Electronic Participation
“Pursuant to the Town’s Remote Electronic Participation Policy, Commissioner Johnson has notified me, as the Vice Chair, that she is unable to attend the meeting due to a personal matter. Arrangements have been made for her voice to be heard by everybody. Commissioner Johnson is participating from her home, in Leesburg, VA.”
Motion Nadler, 2nd Grandjean. Passes 4-0
4. Pledge of Allegiance
5. Agenda Change Moving New Business in front of Old Business
 - a. Motion to Move New Business ahead of old business Grandjean, 2nd Nadler. Passes 5-0.
6. Approval of Minutes – May 2, 2023
Motion to approve Nadler, 2nd Fulcer. Passes 5-0.
7. Petitioners – None
8. New Business
CentralSquare Community Development Application – Diana Witek

Mr. Callahan opened the new business section of the meeting; the presentation will discuss the project involved transitioning from the county's Land Management Information System (LMIS). Diana, who previously worked for the county, was hired as a Senior Analyst in IT after going through an interview process led by Bill McIntyre, the Senior System Architect and Mr. Callahan. The recommendation was made for Diana to apply for a position in the Town Manager's Office to lead the LMIS transition project. She successfully competed for the position and was appointed. Her contribution to the project in the Town of Leesburg has been significant. Mr. Callahan then passed the floor to Mrs. Witek for her Community Development Presentation.

Mrs. Witek mentioned that Central Square is the vendor for a software called Community Development, which is replacing the LMIS (Land Management Information System) that is in place for 20 years from Loudoun County. They expressed the desire to move away from the LMIS and discussed the executive sponsor, Keith Markel, and the team members involved, including Bill McIntyre and representatives from Plan Review, Planning, and Zoning. The project timeline was outlined, with the RFP issued before the speaker joined in April 2021. Central Square was chosen as the vendor, and the contract was finalized after the speaker's arrival. The goal was to replace the LMIS before March of 2022, which had been delayed due to the county's own delays. The speaker highlighted the partnership with Central Square and the assigned consultant who worked closely with them, understanding the requirements, and customizing the software. Business process workshops were conducted, followed by extensive workbook preparations for each module. Testing and issue resolution took place, leading to the system going live on April 24, 2023. The new system aimed to replace LMIS functionality while offering additional features like interfacing with the town's Laserfiche repository, improved searching and reporting, and an online portal called E-Trackit for contractors and citizens to apply for permits and projects. The speaker expressed excitement about the customization possibilities and the convenience of the portal.

Mrs. Witek demonstrated the functionality of the online portal called E-Trackit, which allows users to apply for permits and projects. She mentioned that she created a guide and provided help documentation for using the system. The portal offers options for creating public accounts or contractor accounts. The speaker logged in using a public account and showcased various features, including permit applications, project management, property search, inspections, and payments. She explained that the system offers multiple payment options and highlighted the availability of an online dashboard displaying project information and pending payments. Mrs. Witek discussed a specific project, mentioning the need for the applicant to pay a fee to proceed with the review process. She also mentioned the integration of GIS data and updates from the county. Additionally, Mrs. Witek briefly touched on the contractor account, which operates similarly to the public account, and highlighted the number of contractors already signed up on the system. She showed them the dashboard and how they can customize what they see.

Mr. Fulcer asked if it is possible to handle the process of organizing a fireworks event online. They mentioned that in their neighborhood in Exeter, they usually block off the street for a block party and fireworks on July 4th. In the past, someone printed out a form, walked through the subdivision, and then delivered it to the police station. The speaker inquired if it would be feasible to complete the form online, take a picture of it, download it, and send it electronically to the police.

Mrs. Witek mentioned that the current system is not set up to handle online submissions for events like fireworks. They explained that they haven't worked with the police department to incorporate their process into the online system yet. However, they expressed interest in implementing a Citizen Response Management (CRM) feature in the future. The CRM would allow residents to report various issues, including those related to the police, and tie them to permits. The speaker highlighted the benefits of such a system, including efficiency for staff members and automatic notifications. They also demonstrated the capability of the system to display site plans and customize colors. Additionally, they mentioned the improved reporting and searching capabilities compared to the previous system. Mrs. Witek mentioned that they can search for active permits and projects in the system. She acknowledged that some of the project numbers displayed are from the previous system, LMIS, and explained that all the historical data from LMIS has been

transferred to the current system. She clarified that the owner's information is withheld from public display, although it can be accessed through the Commissioner of Revenue. The speaker concluded by summarizing the information provided.

Councilman Steinberg mentioned that homeowners can register for an account and suggested placing the account setup option at the top of the page instead of another location. They stated that this is a minor suggestion and asked how the account creation process works.

Councilman Steinberg asked how would a small business then interface with this if they've got a project.

Mrs. Witek explained that homeowners have the option to create either a homeowner or contractor account. The contractor account is not limited to general contractors and can be used by professionals such as architects or design firms involved in the project.

Councilman Steinberg mentioned that the system is suitable for all projects, regardless of their size. They then asked whether one should start with a project or a permit when initiating the process, specifically mentioning the example of building a shed that requires both a permit and a review.

Mrs. Witek acknowledged that it's a good question and explained that if someone starts with the wrong option (either project or permit), they would be notified and redirected accordingly, possibly to the plan review process. She also mentioned the availability of a pre-application type, where individuals can submit a no-fee pre-application if they are unsure about which permit or project they need. A meeting would then be arranged to determine the appropriate application process for their specific needs.

Mrs. Witek mentioned that they currently have an E-tracking guide available for users to understand how to use the system, but they would like to expand on that by creating informative videos. They acknowledged the importance of providing walkthroughs, especially for common inquiries, and expressed the intention to prioritize that in the future. Staff members are actively assisting and answering questions from both homeowners and contractors, including through training sessions. The next major implementation will involve capital projects and right of way permits in the public works and planning departments. Mrs. Witek concluded by expressing excitement about the ongoing progress and future developments.

Mr. Grandjean asked how do you prioritize what's next? Like if you wanted to add a form or something.

Mrs. Witek acknowledged that organizing a user group with representatives from different departments to discuss priorities and gather input is a good idea. She mentioned that although they haven't organized it yet, they have plans to establish such a user group within the current year.

9. Old Business

- a. Digital Town Hall Technology and Communications Commission Public Input – Discussion

Mr. Nadler mentioned that he attempted to create some questions for the front page but discussed the idea of having separate surveys for residents and businesses, or a single survey

with branching questions. He stated that this approach would provide topics for discussion and help determine the appropriate questions to ask. He suggested considering different question formats, such as yes/no, rating scales, short answers, and longer responses. Mr. Nadler concluded by expressing his intention to continue the conversation.

Mr. Callahan during the conversation, it is mentioned that in the previous meeting, Richard brought up the idea of incorporating activities related to Ida Lee into the digital town hall. The suggestion is to consider focusing on digital town hall activities specific to Ida Lee and Balch, rather than having a generalized list of questions. This idea is acknowledged as something discussed in the previous meeting.

Mr. Jackson asks if the questions have been forwarded to the person from public relations who was present at the previous meeting. Mr. Callahan responds that the questions have not been forwarded yet. He suggests starting with a general set of questions and then finalizing or modifying them before seeking input from Kara to see what she thinks.

Mr. Jackson expresses his recommendation and appreciation for Aaron's work on the questions. He mentions his personal interest in certain facilities like Ida Lee, the tennis center, and the gym, and suggests that these are important to residents. Mr. Jackson then asks for John's recommendation on how to proceed.

Mr. Callahan suggests taking Aaron's questions and considering all the facilities, such as PD parks, utilities department, and the airport. He proposes having specific questions for each facility and a range of general questions that cover various services provided by the town. He also mentions the idea of grouping questions based on responses to avoid dropping relevant questions. Mr. Callahan emphasizes the goal of making the digital experience easier for both residents and businesses, highlighting the ongoing discussion as part of the Digital town hall initiative.

Mr. Nadler shares his intention behind the questions, acknowledging that there may be things he is unaware of, such as the tracker mentioned. He suggests that the initial step would be to come up with general questions and then refine them, possibly through wordsmithing or finalization. Mr. Nadler explains that having a set of general questions would make it easier to identify patterns and determine which specific questions to ask, whether related to Ida Lee, getting a permit, or other topics. He also suggests seeking input from others, acknowledging their greater involvement and knowledge in the matter.

Mr. Jackson suggests that once a strategy is developed, it would be beneficial to conduct test surveys. He proposes involving the IT team and town employees in facilitating the surveys, allowing them to provide recommendations and share their observations on what they would like to see or what they feel is missing. Mr. Jackson believes that this approach would be effective in gathering valuable input and insights.

Councilman Steinberg expresses agreement with the previous discussion and raises a question about involving the various department heads to provide specific input. He highlights the example of the airport, emphasizing its unique operations and suggesting that department

heads would have valuable insights into the interactions and services that would be better served through the digital town hall.

Mr. Fulcer agrees with the previous comments and draws attention to the parks and recreation department, highlighting their extensive experience conducting surveys over the years. He suggests approaching the department heads, specifically Rich and Kate, to seek their expertise in transitioning the survey process to a digital format. Mr. Fulcer believes that the department heads, including Rich and Kate, possess the knowledge and skills necessary to guide and assist in this digital transformation.

Councilman Steinberg raises a minor suggestion for improvement. He proposes a revision to question 2 of the survey, suggesting a more positive approach. Instead of asking if there was a digital town hall, he suggests rephrasing it to ask respondents what services they would like to see in their digital town. This modification aims to make the question more personalized and engaging for the participants.

Mr. Callahan explains that during their presentation to department directors and deputy directors, they emphasized the importance of understanding their departments' roles from the perspective of a businessperson or homeowner. They encouraged the department heads to consider the services they offer, the information provided to residents and businesses, and whether processes could be made digital. Mr. Callahan assures Aaron that the department heads will be available to assist in crafting more specific questions if necessary.

Mr. Grandjean emphasizes the importance of keeping the survey focused on determining the most logical and useful features of the town hall. The goal is to prioritize the needs of the community and address any pain points.

Mr. Nadler agrees, likening the process to a voting concept where people's preferences and concerns guide decision-making.

Mr. Grandjean suggests structuring the survey with an initial question that relates to how respondents interact or would like to interact with the town, such as identifying if they are contractors or residents. They discuss the possibility of a drop-down list with different roles to tailor subsequent questions, accordingly, directing participants to specific areas of interest, such as parks and recreation.

Mr. Jackson acknowledges that the process of refining the survey is ongoing and seeks Mr. Nadler's input on the next steps. They consider the possibility of wordsmithing the survey or collectively thinking it through and discussing it in more detail at the next meeting.

Mr. Nadler expresses his willingness to make the necessary adjustments based on specific feedback. He suggests collaborating with John to create a list of services and develop a more detailed version of the survey, focusing on residential and generic business questions, which they can review at the next meeting.

Mr. Jackson raises a question regarding town services and specifically mentions the process of obtaining a car sticker as an example. He wonders how new residents can register their cars with the county and town and if the registration is linked to tax payments.

Mr. Callahan explains that new residents need to register their cars with Loudon County, and the town receives that information since town taxes are paid through the county. He mentions that the process can be done online, and although there is no longer a physical sticker, residents still need to register their cars by providing title information.

Mr. Jackson offers to contribute by refining the list of services and including ones he personally uses that may not currently mentioned. He mentions the library, noting that it is actually managed by the county despite its proximity to Ida Lee, which is more closely associated with the town. He suggests revisiting the list and encourages others to review the questions generated by ChatGPT to see if there are any appealing options. He also asks if there are any further questions on old business.

10. Commissioner Comments.

Mr. Jackson reminded everyone that the July Meeting has been rescheduled and Mr. Callahan responded that it is July 12th at 7PM in the Council Chamber.

Mr. Jackson shared a personal note about his grandson's artwork that is displayed in the hallway of the IT department. He mentions that they recently visited to see it, but the office was closed at the time. He expresses pride in his grandson's artwork and mentions that it is part of an exhibit featuring artwork from students at Catocin Elementary School. He also mentions a quilt exhibit on the first floor.

Mr. Fulcer expresses his concerns about the internet connectivity issues on the town's website. He mentions that he visited the website three times that day and noticed a prominent message indicating the connectivity problems. As someone who deals with similar issues professionally, he emphasizes the seriousness of such problems and suggests that it requires urgent attention from all involved. Mr. Fulcer seeks clarification on the specific impacts of the internet issues, how long they have been ongoing, and any estimated time for resolution. He also refers to an earlier mention of a workaround and asks for further details on the current state of the internet problem and its impact on the town.

Mr. Callahan clarifies the situation regarding internet connectivity issues. He states that the town website was fully functional throughout the day with no impact. However, there were some issues with accessing the internet in certain applications within the town network, specifically related to community development and the WebTrac system. The problem was identified as a firewall issue with the internet service provider. Mr. Callahan assures that tickets were opened, and they monitored the situation closely. He provided periodic updates to all town staff regarding the progress of resolving the issue. By the end of the day, services were reported to be stable, and he instructed any further issues to be directed to the help desk for monitoring.

Mr. Nadler thanks for putting the meeting together and that Diana had a great presentation and know on the new things happening in Town.

Mrs. Johnson was thankful for the presentation and will try to prepare some questions as well.

Mr. Jackson wished Mrs. Johnson's daughter a Happy Birthday.

Council Rep Comments.

Councilman Steinberg looks forward to seeing everyone at the fourth of July parade and to enjoy the summer.

11. IT Director Comments

Mr. Callahan thanked the commissioners for all that they do in providing input and Kuba will be back for the July meeting and to have a good summer and fourth of July.

12. Adjourn 7:54PM Motion to adjourn; Nadler, 2nd Fulcer. Passes 5-0

Next Meeting, July 12, 2023, 7:00 pm.