Technology & Communications Commission
MINUTES
January 2, 2024

Commission Members Present: John Binkley Chair
                             Richard Jackson, Vice Chair
                             Aaron Nadler
                             Katherine Johnson
                             Brandon Garay

Absent   Chris Grandjean
                             Eric Whyne

Council Liaison Present: Neil Steinberg

Staff Present: Jakub Jedrzejczak
                             John Callahan

1. Call to Order 7:00PM

2. Establish Quorum
    a. Quorum present.

3. Pledge of Allegiance
4. Approval of Minutes – December 5, 2023
        Motion to approve   Jackson 2nd Johnson Motion Passes 5-0.
5. Petitioners – None
6. Election of Officers
        Election of Chair Motion By Jackson for John Binkley to serve as Chair, 2nd Johnson
        Motion Passes 4-0-1. (Binkley Abstains)
        Election of Vice Chair Motion by Binkley for Richard Jackson to serve as Vice Chair, 2nd
        Nadler Motion Passes 5-0
7. Meeting Calendar
    a. Motion by Jackson to meet every first Tuesday of the month, 2nd Johnson, Motion
        Passes 5-0
        Mr. Callahan indicated that there are some changes to the Town Code allowing the
Commission to meet a minimum of 9 times, and up tp 12.
        Mr. Binkley and the commission were in agreement at this time to meet 12 times and
reschedule the November meeting as it is the same day as the 2024 election day. He ask Mr.
Callahan to find alternate days for the November meeting and the Commission can vote to move the
November meeting date at the February 2024 meeting.

8. Old Business
    a. Digital Town Hall Technology and Communications Commission Public Input –
        Discussion – Russell Seymour Economic Development Director

    Mr. Jedrzejczak introduced Russell Seymour as the Economic Development Director and
    provided context about the Commission's efforts to engage the public on improving technology

for residents and businesses. He mentioned the identification of two major groups: residents and businesses. The Commission is assessing current strengths and areas for improvement through surveys. Mr. Jedrzejczak highlighted that Mr. Seymour, with his expertise and use of communication tools, will share insights from the business community. Mr. Seymour has employed technology, including a new economic development website, for outreach. Mr. Jedrzejczak expressed openness to answering questions and thanked everyone for their participation.

Mr. Seymour expressed gratitude for the opportunity to speak and acknowledged the importance of gathering information from the business community. He emphasized the significance of seeking input directly from businesses, as they possess valuable insights into what works and what doesn't. Mr. Seymour highlighted changes in the way consultants approach business information, now relying on online sources like websites before reaching out to communities. He discussed the efforts of Leesburg's economic development, particularly through the chooseleesburg.com website, which focuses on marketing and providing information for businesses. The website includes a business directory to promote local businesses and offers information on navigating town processes, permits, zoning, and taxes. Mr. Seymour emphasized the importance of speed for businesses and highlighted the role of the economic development office as an ombudsman for the local business community. He mentioned ongoing initiatives, such as creating videos to showcase local businesses and the success of the approach in fostering community engagement. Finally, he expressed optimism about the direction of their efforts and welcomed any questions from the Commission.

Mr. Binkley inquired about recurring requests or common themes that arise in conversations with businesses. He specifically asked if there were identifiable top five or frequently recurring needs or concerns expressed by businesses during discussions.

Mr. Seymour highlighted that businesses often seek information on practical aspects, such as how to navigate processes like submitting special use permits or determining zoning for specific sites. He emphasized that many questions revolve around understanding the steps involved in the town's approval process. He noted that Leesburg's uniqueness lies in businesses often dealing with both the town and Loudoun County, resulting in the need to navigate two different sets of websites, commissioner revenues, and finance offices. The challenge includes understanding and aligning with different acronyms and procedures from both entities.

Mr. Binkley asked if it was workforce issues. What does that mean?

Mr. Seymour discussed the importance of workforce considerations for businesses, focusing on hiring and training. He provided an example of a cybersecurity business that not only brings employees but also looks to hire locally. In terms of workforce development, he mentioned reaching out to educational institutions such as Loudoun Community College, high schools, and universities like George Mason University to understand the training opportunities they offer. Additionally, he addressed the support given to startup businesses, including those with limited knowledge of basic business operational skills. Mr. Seymour emphasized the diverse range of training needs, from specific skills related to a particular business type or computer program to more fundamental areas like basic bookkeeping.
Mr. Binkley asked the following questions:
What are you looking for out of the digital town Hall initiative?

What would you like to see?
What benefit are important to you out of that?

Mr. Seymour emphasized the importance of providing accurate information in a timely and easily understandable format. He highlighted the challenge of ensuring that the data on the website is presented in a way that allows the general public to process and comprehend it. Mr. Seymour also stressed the need for maintaining accuracy and responsiveness when people reach out via email or respond to the information provided on the website. He emphasized the significance of not only pulling in a lot of information but also ensuring that it is kept up to date and responding promptly to inquiries or feedback.

Mr. Binkley mentioned the importance of replicating a single point of contact even if a Generative AI chat function is implemented as part of a digital town hall initiative. He highlighted the need to ensure that any requests generated through such a system could be managed effectively, maintaining a centralized and coordinated approach to address inquiries or requests.

Mr. Seymour emphasized the importance of ensuring that questions generated through any opportunity for inquiries are directed to the appropriate departments immediately. He highlighted the need for a streamlined process, especially for questions related to utilities or business operations. Mr. Seymour expressed the concern that without a proper system, inquiries might get caught up or not reach the correct individuals who can provide accurate and timely responses. He stressed the significance of making sure that questions are directed to the right people who can effectively address them, particularly from a business standpoint.

Mr. Binkley asks do you think the information on the website right now that's important to you in terms of economic development is accessible and accurate?

Mr. Seymour discussed the need for businesses to have links on the town's website connecting them to the appropriate county sites. He highlighted the efforts made with the choose Leesburg site to consolidate information and make it accessible from one website. While acknowledging the accuracy and accessibility of the current information, he mentioned ongoing work to improve the format. Mr. Seymour also mentioned a business assistance team initiative aimed at providing information to the business community in a more streamlined and accessible manner.

Mr. Jackson asked how do you basically get that information or have the ability to talk to the business people to tell them that there's a site that they can use and it's populated with data that they would be helpful to them?

Mr. Seymour explained the strategies employed to disseminate information to businesses. The town used various channels, including advertising in the paper, email blitzes, and direct emails to ensure that the majority of businesses in Leesburg were contacted. He emphasized the ripple effect, where businesses share information with others, creating a network effect. Mr. Seymour also highlighted the importance of personal outreach, spending time meeting one-on-one with local businesses to share information and gather feedback. The content on the website and social media is influenced by input from existing businesses, aligning with the approach of responding to the actual needs and feedback from the local business community rather than imposing preconceived solutions.

Mr. Jedrzejczak discussed the importance of retaining local businesses in Leesburg and highlighted the "Locally Leesburg" program that features interviews with various businesses, fostering a sense of community engagement. He emphasized the need for businesses to have a tool that is crafted for them, mentioning the digital town hall as a means to enhance the overall experience for different business types. Mr. Jedrzejczak recognized the diversity in preferences for communication platforms, acknowledging that not everyone uses the same channels, and stressed the importance of creating a personalized experience for business owners. He discussed the challenge of information overload on the town's website and expressed interest in the new approach of the digital town hall to streamline and tailor the information. Mr. Jedrzejczak also acknowledged the feedback gathered from businesses during the COVID-19 pandemic and highlighted the role of surveys in understanding business needs and technology challenges. He emphasized the importance of effective communication and finding the right mechanisms to address frequently asked questions for businesses.

Mr. Seymour discussed the importance of monitoring website analytics to track which pages are frequently visited and which information is being downloaded. This data-driven approach allows for regular updates and maintenance of the website based on the specific needs and interests of users. He emphasized the shift from traditional practices of building a website and revisiting it after a few years to the current practice of continuous monitoring on a monthly basis. Mr. Seymour also highlighted the significance of creating a website that is easily maintainable, emphasizing the need for information to be regularly updated to ensure accuracy and relevance.

Mr. Binkley as if there is a priority that you would like the commission to publicize or push that would be helpful that you currently don't have?

Mr. Seymour emphasized the proactive approach taken by the town, particularly in collaboration with Cuba and his team, to explore and implement new strategies. He highlighted the recent establishment of an economic development website as an example of utilizing and maximizing available resources. While acknowledging his own limited technical expertise, Mr. Seymour underscored the importance of staying ahead of the curve, especially given the prevalence of tech-based companies in the area. He expressed the need to continue trying new things to ensure Leesburg remains at the forefront, setting the pace for the region and avoiding falling behind Loudoun County.

Mr. Binkley thanked Mr. Seymour for coming and talking before the commission.

b. Verizon Franchise Agreement – Final Discussion

Motion read into the record by Mr. Binkley, "The Technology and Communications Commission has been involved and worked with town staff and outside counsel on the Verizon Cable Franchise Renewal Agreement, including participating in a public forum. While we can not speak to the legal elements of the agreement, we are confident in the process and due diligence that has been followed to reach this renewal. "

> Motion by Jackson to approve the draft Verizon Endorse Franchise Agreement, 2nd
> Garay Motion Passes 5-0

Mr. Callahan mentioned that the town attorney and outside legal counsel, Matt Ames, have reviewed a document and concluded that it's at a stage where it can be taken to the Council for approval. The item is scheduled for the January 23rd meeting for the Council to approve the franchise agreement. He noted that there is a date issue in the document (December 31st, 2023), which will be corrected before finalization.

Mr. Binkley asked what the reference to FTP network is to providing cable services.

Mr. Callahan responded that Verizon delivers the cable service via fiber in the right of way and to use the right of way to deliver those services.

Mr. Callahan discussed efforts to obtain a list of addresses for properties that have cable services, as mapping this information could be beneficial. He highlighted the significant advocacy for the HD (High Definition) channel, a priority from the beginning of discussions. The PEG funding percentage was maintained despite a decrease in cable subscriptions, resulting in a reduction in funding due to fewer subscribers. He acknowledged the prolonged and complex nature of the discussions, exacerbated by the challenges posed by COVID-19. Collaboration with other jurisdictions was mentioned, and the goal is to maintain consistency in franchise agreements across the region.

c. AI Use Policy – Information

Mr. Jedrzejczak discussed his collaboration with John on drafting a policy related to AI. He acknowledged that it is in the beta stage and highlighted the diversity in policies by referencing examples from cities like Seattle and Boston. He expressed gratitude to Joan and the Commission for addressing the challenges posed by AI and emphasized the need to develop guidelines for the town. Mr. Jedrzejczak suggested forming a mini working group, including another commissioner, to expedite the process and facilitate discussions. He stressed the importance of facing the challenges posed by AI rather than pretending they don't exist. Mr. Jedrzejczak also mentioned the availability of additional materials, including training videos, and encouraged commissioners to review them. He plans to discuss the draft with the town attorney before seeking approval from town leadership, expressing uncertainty about the appropriate next steps in dealing with this new technology. Overall, he expressed gratitude for the open discussion and welcomed any suggestions from the commissioners.

Mr. Binkley provided insights into different approaches to AI policies by referring to a spectrum. On one extreme, there's a cautious approach like Maine, suggesting a temporary halt to AI use for further understanding. On the other extreme, Seattle has an interim policy aiming to minimize issues and encourage AI use. Boston falls in the middle, emphasizing responsibility for outcomes when using AI tools. Mr. Binkley suggested viewing policies on a risk-innovation continuum, emphasizing the need for a balanced approach. He highlighted the role of policies as a foundational element in the security world, serving as a statement of intent rather than detailing every procedure. His perspective aimed to guide the review of AI policies by considering different approaches and recognizing the importance of balancing risk and innovation.

Mr. Jackson asks if the Commission can have the next four weeks to review the document.

Mr. Jedrzejczak responds in the affirmative. Mr. Jedrzejczak emphasized the importance of perspective in dealing with new technology, acknowledging that different members of the town council may have varying viewpoints. He pointed out a specific point, 44.1, in the policy that he collaborated on with one of his employees and strongly supports. This point emphasizes the accountability of employees for the outcomes produced by AI tools. Mr. Jedrzejczak compared AI tools to kitchen utensils, highlighting that they are tools with various purposes, and he stressed the need to communicate that anything generated by AI is just a tool, similar to tools in a kitchen.

Mr. Jedrzejczak continued to stress the importance of accountability in using AI, using the analogy of tools like a cake knife or a stapler to emphasize the responsibility of the user. He highlighted point 4.1 in the policy as foundational, emphasizing that employees are accountable for outcomes produced by AI tools. He expressed satisfaction that the town is not avoiding the challenges posed by technology but is actively working on addressing them. Mr. Jedrzejczak urged the Commission to consider the town's proactive approach to technology and recommended recognizing the significance of new tools, especially when widely used by millions of users. He encouraged the Commission to read the provided links and consider perspectives as residents and business owners. Mr. Jedrzejczak expressed optimism about the opportunities AI presents while emphasizing the need for responsibility in its use, urging everyone to think about how AI usage aligns with the expectations of residents and business owners.

Mr. Binkley ask the commission if there is any interest in having an AI working group.

Mr. Jedrzejczak indicated that there would at least need to be one other person.

Mr. Binkley asked the commission to think about joining an AI working group.

Mr. Steinberg raised the issue of potential liability regarding ChatGPT and Microsoft. He mentioned litigation against both entities and expressed concern about the correctness and potential moral issues associated with the information provided by the software. He questioned whether liability issues could extend to end users, such as the New York Times, even if they use the information unattributed or without compensation. While acknowledging the moral aspect, he also hinted at the possibility of legal ramifications for end users, suggesting it might not be outside the realm of possibility in current circumstances.

Mr. Jedrzejczak acknowledged the complexity of the question raised about liability and suggested that the Commission may not be the best people to answer it definitively. He proposed that the next step in addressing the issue should involve consulting the town attorney. He emphasized the importance of providing the town attorney with some thoughts, feelings, and recommendations on the matter. Mr. Jedrzejczak drew parallels with the challenges faced by Google and shared an example from his experience in Loudon County, highlighting the use of predefined phrases in employee performance evaluations without explicit attribution. He likened it to the use of ChatGPT, suggesting that while some areas may require reference, there are instances, such as spell check, where information is provided without referencing AI sources. He anticipated that navigating this line would be interesting and raised the issue of information delivery to residents without explicitly referencing AI tools.

Mr. Steinberg characterized the upcoming discussion as interesting and cited an example involving Apple Watch. He mentioned that Apple temporarily stopped selling two versions due to a patent infringement lawsuit. Mr. Steinberg noted that, in the case of the Apple Watch, there wasn't an expectation for purchasers to face liability for buying the product. However, he highlighted the complexity of the larger question at hand.

Mr. Binkley pointed out that the issue at hand may not necessarily be a core problem with AI, but rather with the process, programming, and the training set. He referenced concerns raised by the New York Times about information, indicating that the focus should be on aspects related to data, training, and programming rather than the fundamental nature of AI itself.

Mr. Binkley suggested that it is feasible to create an AI system without using the New York Times data set to avoid potential legal issues. He acknowledged that such an approach might make the AI less useful initially but emphasized the possibility of training AI in a way that doesn't expose users to litigation threats. He highlighted the importance of the training set chosen, indicating that the efficacy of the AI depends on the data it is fed, with more comprehensive data leading to better results.

Mr. Jedrzejczak emphasized the importance of the current awareness stage regarding AI. He mentioned teaching an awareness class and highlighted the significance of settings that allow users to avoid training AI on sensitive data. He emphasized the presence of built-in rules within AI, such as harmlessness and helpfulness, and restrictions on accessing certain types of information. Mr. Jedrzejczak stressed the need for awareness among users, the community, and town employees to avoid training AI on sensitive data. He expressed gratitude for the Commission and the leadership's willingness to confront the challenges associated with AI, recognizing that people across America are using it. Mr. Jedrzejczak outlined a progression of steps, including building awareness, creating guidelines and policies, and providing employees with proper training on using AI responsibly. He acknowledged that not all questions may have answers yet but highlighted the importance of taking steps in the right direction.

Mr. Binkley concluded the discussion by suggesting that everyone go home and watch their favorite movies. He mentioned the plan to create a top ten AI movie list for the next meeting and requested it to be included on the agenda. In his closing comments, Mr. Binkley expressed gratitude to the Commission for their faith and support in the ongoing efforts related to AI. He assured them that he would strive not to let anyone down and conveyed his appreciation for the privilege of working with the Commission.

9. New Business – None

10. Commissioner Comments.

    Mr. Jackson appreciates everything that you do and your knowledge.

11. Council Rep Comments.

    Mr. Steinberg welcomes everyone back from a good holiday and that the commission in moving forward.

12. IT Director Comments

    Mr. Jedrzejczak congratulated John Rich on being reelected and expressed his appreciation for the past year. He conveyed his excitement about starting a new year and expressed pride in Leesburg's efforts. Mr. Jedrzejczak highlighted the value of engaging in discussions on topics without clear answers and commended the Commission for its willingness to discuss such matters. He mentioned the possibility of providing a cybersecurity update for the next meeting, acknowledging that other time-sensitive items took precedence during the current session. Mr. Jedrzejczak concluded by expressing gratitude and seeking the Commission's approval to continue the AI policy discussion in the upcoming meeting.

13. Adjourn 8:28 PM Motion to adjourn Jackson, 2nd Garay Motion Passes   5-0

Next Meeting, February 6, 2024, 7:00 pm.