



Public Works Department

City of Bellingham

Broadband Advisory WG

Meeting Notes

Tuesday, February 1, 2022

6:00pm – 7:45PM

Zoom

WG Members in attendance:

Spencer Moore

Michelle Kopcha

Milissa Miller

Linda Fels

Steve Spitzer

Kristopher Keillor

RB Tewksbury

Ex Officio Members in attendance:

Terry Davis

David Namura

David Brinn

Michael Gan

Atul Deshmane

Guest Presenters:

Jory Wolf, Magellan Advisors LLC

Greg Laudeman, Magellan Advisors LLC

David Roberts, Facilitator

Eric Johnston, Public Works Director

City Staff and Facilitator in attendance:

Don Burdick, Information Technology, GIS Services Administrator

Rush Duncan, Public Works Webinar Support

1. Welcome, Introductions, Agenda Review, Approval of Notes

David Roberts opened the meeting and welcomed everyone. He pointed out that the January notes should state that Magellan will be able to supply survey statistics by neighborhood. Eric Johnston reported that the Chamber of Commerce shared the survey with their membership although they did not post it on their website.

Notes from January are approved with amendments.

2. Administrative & Technology Items Update

Eric Johnston shared that Wholesail Networks (Zipty) will be presenting to the Public Works Natural Resources Committee for City Council on February 7th regarding their application for a franchise agreement. They are not intending to provide retail services to residents. Their application indicates 40,000 lineal feet of over-lashed fiber will be installed.

Engineering

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3. Outline schedule for next 5-6 months

(David Roberts shows possible Timeline for Broadband Group)

Eric reported that the City Council extended our work timeline to September of 2022. They requested the Workgroup (WG) “give us a succinct recommendation.” Recommendations from the WG are needed prior to September. The Council needs time for review and come back with additional questions if need be. This moves the target date for completing products to June with the hope for Council action in July or August.

Normal budget deliberations begin in March. Between March and September City department heads provide a proposed budget to Mayor’s office, and then to Council in September. New programs come into effect in January.

City management needs a policy basis to put something in the budget. Magellan’s work needs to be done in the April/May timeframe as specified in their contract for us to stay on track. An agenda bill and packet will need to be created with hopes for a presentation on the WG recommendations at the June 27 Council Meeting. For that to take place, the WG needs to be ready by June 7th.

Eric recommended the WG provide the Council with a summary agenda bill and a WG report or staff memo along with attachments including the report from Magellan, the list of definitions by this group, and a summary of the WG meetings.

David Roberts, Eric, RB, and Steve met to plan out the schedule and the deliverables for the remainder of the year. They identified opportunities for subgroups to prepare the following products: final definitions, a summary of meetings, drafting a resolution and report, and preparing a presentation for council presentation. The schedule for each subgroup is woven into the schedule proposed. Products from each subgroup would be discussed at an upcoming meeting. This will keep the WG on track while also providing some “wiggle room” in July/August.

Eric indicated he would draft the agenda bill which comes out of this groups report. RB added that the WG is not locked into this schedule. If more time is needed, that can be a recommendation. This is the time to put the pieces together. Steve pointed out that the WG is coming into this funnel where the WG will be inundated with information and many elements in the report. One of the recommendations could be that more time is needed, which could be part of the report to the Council. There is a lot to digest with the time available. More time may be needed to come up with solid recommendations.

David Roberts pointed out the presentation on the WG definitions to City Council shown on the schedule. Eric stated this would be a great accomplishment as an interim deliverable.

Some discussion followed regarding what might be included in the recommendations. There may be a way to break things up. Some actions may be low hanging fruit while others may require further deliberation. Folks appreciated the idea of having some flexibility. As the WG gets nearer to the completion time, it would be appropriate to discuss if there are next steps after the WG concludes its formal business.

Several members were interested in getting Magellan’s thoughts on the WG definitions. Greg indicated they would be happy to help contribute to the definitions. The definitions will provide input to the Magellan study for the conceptual network design.

There was also discussion about the need for public comment with regards to the WG report. Eric pointed out that the WG mission is to inform the City

Council by providing recommendations, but not public input on those recommendations. The City Council's role is to make informed decisions that benefit the community. They welcome public comment on any topic at any time. Public comment on the WG activities can be submitted at any time via email or phone call. Those messages are forwarded to the entire WG to ensure comments are heard and questions answered.

The WG agreed with the proposed timeline. David Roberts committed to send it out right away.

4. Magellan Advisors Update

Greg Laudeman provided a high level summary of the data gathered in the survey:

- Completed surveys: 1,059
- Partially completed surveys: 786
- Total surveys received: 1,845
- 95.6% Households
- 3.0% Organizations
- 1.4% Individuals without a physical address

Neighborhood overlays will take another level of analysis. Magellan will be able to show a breakdown by neighborhood, but after cleanup is done. There were no native Spanish responses. Eric agreed to post the survey results to the City's website as soon as it is available.

Outreach efforts were discussed. Several folks wished they could have done more to get the survey out to more people in the community. The group thanked Spencer Moore for all his efforts to get input from students at WCC. Due to the project schedule, there appears to be no additional time for survey collection. We will be able to tell whose voices were not included in the survey.

Jory Wolf pointed out that communities of Bellingham's size typically have between 1200 to 2400 responses. The responses in the survey were within that range. Also, the ratio of completed to non-completed surveys was very typical. Importantly, he noted that even though a survey is considered incomplete, the most important information to collect is front loaded. This includes the speed test. So incomplete surveys still provide valuable information for the study.

Greg spoke of how the WG approach to learning about the community's needs is different from how a traditional corporate telecom would approach providing service. They would never have a group like this, nor would there be community input on priorities. Planning decisions are about shareholder value. What is driving this process is community value.

Our conversation shifted to defining what inputs would be most helpful to Magellan as they prepare their report. Are there specific inputs and requirements that would help in the creation of the report? Greg Laudeman pointed out it's a question of what services are important to the community and where should they be offered. The WG could provide feedback on all of the business model options. This could be an agenda item in the future. The WG's analysis regarding the needs of our city can help tune Magellan to the goals. The conceptual model and financial analysis will help answer many questions.

Eric reminded everyone that the resolution states the direction to Magellan is to emphasize service to the home. Much of this was defined in the early meetings

of the WG. The hope shared was that Magellan would be providing a cost estimate for each level of service and that this information would be used to craft the recommendations. Jory confirmed that Magellan will provide a range of business options. David Roberts pointed out they are looking to the resolution, the definitions, and the purpose and mission document – those are the primary inputs that will go into this process.

The discussion shifted to how the WG process is coming together. Some raised concerns that assumptions have been made about the direction of the WG is taking. The financial model is still needed for the WG to make recommendations. Jory shared that the survey and market analysis will be included which will take into account the cost of services that need to be added.

Lastly, a question was raised about the impact on existing commercial networks if the City went to a direct competitive retail model. Will that be included in the report? Jory responded that Magellan never recommends a city compete head-to-head unless the services indicate that its necessary through the survey and outreach.

5. Present contents of typical agenda bill for Council
There was insufficient time to discuss the contents of a typical agenda bill. Eric committed to email a sample to the group for review.
6. Discuss development of final definitions
David Roberts asked for volunteers for a subgroup to finalize the definitions. Linda Fels, Spencer Moore, and Milissa Miller volunteered. They will bring their recommendations back to the whole group for the March 1st meeting. The subgroup will need to meet before the 3rd week of February.
Once the WG has blessed the final definitions, there will a presentation to Council for April 25th meeting. Spencer Moore volunteered to make that presentation.
7. Evaluate Meeting and discuss future meeting agendas
David Roberts suggested the following items for the March 1st meeting: 1) Review and approve definitions from subgroup; 2) Magellan presentation on survey results.
A second subgroup needs to be formed to develop a summary of meetings. Michelle Kopcha, Steve Spitzer, and Terry Davis volunteered.
Before we ended the meeting, David Brinn suggested that the March meeting include a discussion of how the results so far all fit together.
Note: David Roberts will add this topic to the draft agenda.

Meeting adjourned 7:50 PM.

Next meeting scheduled for Tuesday, March 1st, 2022 at 6:00 PM via Zoom