<div align="center">

MINUTES
CITY OF FORT COLLINS
FUTURES COMMITTEE MEETING

</div>

Date: September 14, 2020
Location: Zoom Webinar
Time: 4:00-6:00pm

Committee Members Present:
Mayor Wade Troxell
Julie Pignataro
Emily Gorgol
Kristin Stephens (alternate)

City Staff:
Jackie Kozak-Thiel, (Staff Liaison)

Presenter:
Francella Ochillo, Executive Director, Next Century Cities

Additional Staff present:
Tyler Marr, City Manager's Office
Keli DiMartino, City Manager's Office
Teresa Roche, Human Resources
Colman Keane, Connexion,
Theresa Connor, Utilities
Caryn Champine, PDT
Carrie Daggett, City Attorney's Office
Sarah Meline, Environmental Services
Beth Sowder, Social Sustainability
Lucinda Smith, Environmental Services
Honore Depew, City Manager's Office
Sierra Anderson, City Manager's Office
Terri Runyon, City Manager's Office
Greg Yeager, Police Services
Kevin Wilkins, IT
Nina Bodenhamer, City Give
Chief Swoboda, Police Services
Community members:
Kevin Jones, FC Chamber
Dustin
Christine

Meeting called to order at 4:05 pm

Approval of Minutes:
Julie moved to approve July 13 minutes. Emily seconded. Motion passed unanimously. 3-0-0.

Chairman Comments: None

Summary
- Fort Collins has a deep-rooted history in advocacy for broadband access
- Consider the difference between access and adoption to broadband
    - Access is about infrastructure
    - Adoption is about what are the barriers to people signing up for and using broadband
- Digital inclusion strategies need to include digital equity
    - Recognize who most under-resourced are in our community
- Steps to achieve digital equity include
    - Identify a goal
    - Collect data on barriers to adoption
    - Assess availability of community resources
    - Engage a number of stakeholders
    - Identify metrics
- Imagine and envision what digital equity means in Fort Collins
    - Are we able to connect households so that all residents are reached?
    - Consider what affordability really means
    - What does digital equity mean for businesses?
- Importance of sharing our stories

Think Tank Item 5-2020: Pragmatic and Visionary Approaches to Digital Inclusion
- Introduction to Next Century Cities
    - 501c3 nonprofit supported by foundations with the goal of supporting local efforts to expand connectivity
    - Support mayors, digital equity offices, residents and others who demand change in their communities so that they have a voice not just at federal level but at state level
    - Next Century Cities seeks to amplify work in communities and have all members recognize the far-reaching impacts of broadband in community
- Fort Collins has deep rooted history of advocacy in broadband
    - Community members appreciate the importance of broadband
    - Support of local officials for broadband—this is especially important in COVID times. Important for local officials be educated, and have the language to make the ask to other levels of government and translate for residents so they have community support for
- Francella reviews milestones in Fort Collins timeline for Broadband highlighting that timeline matters for structural changes to take place for broadband access
    - Need long-term planning and long-term community partnerships
    - Need to be learners of the issues and ongoing funding and support
    - Long-term commitment makes it easier to gauge success of broadband efforts
    - It is important to recognize where we are now, and that there is always work to be done to ensure that every single resident can get online in a meaningful way and contribute to the digital ecosystem after they have obtained access.

- There is a difference between ACCESS and ADOPTION
  - Focus tends on resources for access and not for adoption
    - In COVID-19 times it is not enough to get the infrastructure in a neighborhood, rather, we need to find a way to get it in the front door—aggressive about broadband access strategies
  - Access refers to proximity to broadband infrastructure
  - Adoption is whether or not a person opts in
    - Need to look at barriers to adoption
  - Often funding is put into access and little in adoption strategies—this is problematic because infrastructure alone is not enough to ensure that people will adopt
- Increasing adoption means looking at digital inclusion and including strategies to address digital equity.
  - Need to recognize who the most under-resourced in our community are: across the Nation, it tends to be communities of color, indigenous groups, Households where English is a second language, the elderly and disabled. There may be reasons they do not adopt.
  - Digital equity requires recognizing that some of these communities may need more support than others.
    - i.e. considering how we divide up resources—spend more money on households that are struggling and be creative in strategies utilized
    - Requires recognition that distribution does not have to be equal to be effective.
- Digital equity is at the core of successful digital inclusion strategies and follows the following steps:
  - Identify a goal
    - Consider what successful strategies to meet the goal will look like
    - Recognize that the goal will not be solved or reached with a single investment or action, it will be an ongoing endeavor
    - When looking at residents there needs to be a shared understanding of who is the most disadvantaged in our community
      - This will help further down the road on the "why" resources are being invested in certain places
  - Collect data on connectivity and barriers to adoption
    - Important to understand what the state of connectivity is right now
    - Across the Country, it is very difficult to for residents who have limited opportunities
    - Continue to see how cycles of poverty affect issues with digital access in addition many other issues such as when residents have students or when they are first responders and front-line workers, it becomes a hub for problems
    - Cycles of poverty are often cloaked in shame—it is difficult to reach out to someone who is disconnected and cannot afford it
    - It is difficult to identify what the magic number is that people can afford—there needs to be data and analysis

- It is necessary to go into analysis with compassion, because the people who are typically asking questions are not the people who find themselves in situations where they cannot afford connectivity
  - o Assess which community resources are available
    - Resources can include non-monetary sources such as relationships churches, nonprofits and other community partners
    - Community partnerships help build social capital and serve as a resource to close connectivity gaps
  - o Engage a number of stakeholders
    - The digital divide cannot be solved without including the most disconnected people at the table
    - Need to bring voices to the table—be creative and consider what it means to have a variety of stakeholders
  - o Identify specific metrics for success
- What does digital equity mean for Fort Collins?
  - o It is important to recognize that while digital equity is on the minds of our Council members and some of our departments, it may be coming up for the first time for some community members
    - Consider how to frame digital equity as an opportunity and not a threat
  - o Defining what is affordable is difficult because for some people affordability means zero, especially in unconventional times
  - o Consider community level partnerships already in place that can help with evolving benchmarks in digital literacy
  - o Recognize that during COVID, we are constantly reacting, it can be difficult to think about the future and what we want out of our digital ecosystem.
  - o Work to intentionally take breaks to dream together and consider what is possible
- Important questions:
  - o Question 1: How will widespread broadband access and adoption change outcomes for residents in Fort Collins?
    - How does this help with economic mobility?
    - How does it help with arts and culture?
    - How does access support our other goals
  - o Question 2: What are the long-term structural changes needed to achieve shared goals?
    - Obstacles? Resources? How do we tap corporate residents to be partners in endeavors?
  - o Question 3: Have you made room at your table for new voices?
    - Look around your table who is there and who is deputized as an expert? We need to think about our comfort zones on who would be a good deputy in our army?

Comments/Q&A:
- Mayor and others highlight the need to think about moving beyond buildout of broadband which has been the focus and consider the outcomes we are trying to achieve
  - o Fort Collins is doing many good things and still has challenges that need to be addressed

- Councilmember Pignataro asks about the affordability option, what are the options if the affordability is zero? Julie—for the affordability option—we know there is one but if someone can afford zero, do we have that option?
  - Francella shares that at the federal level there has been a movement to have a broadband subsidy and there is the lifeline program where rates are only $9.95 a month for individuals who qualify for other government subsidies.
    - Only 33% of the eligible population took advantage of the program so it became a question of if mor should be invested in this program and what are the barriers?
    - When COVID hit, questions raised about if 9.95 is affordable or is zero affordable? Continue to be evolving questions in this space
- Coleman shares digital equity moved up in general fund for broader city initiative—general fund level allows for engagement of more programs
- Darin thanks Francella and that he is thankful for the partnership with Next Century Cities
  - Futures committee has played a role in the evolution of getting a municipal broadband and Darin shares the story of the journey of getting to this place
  - Hope that Fort Collins story can help others get there.
- Importance of storytelling especially at the federal and state levels to leverage this work
  - Share both successes and challenges
  - Ask what communities need and support the model that works for various communities
  - Consider what story we want people to tell about Fort Collins
- Discussion about what the barriers are to adoption
  - What are the adoptions that need to be considered at a more granular level?
    - i.e. while the school district was able to give some students hotspots and laptops, this doesn't help all people
- Discussion around how much of an access point the libraries were and how COVID impacted this
  - Prior to COVID 25% of population at or below the poverty line across the U.S. relied on libraries for Broadband
- Consider who we are trying to connect. If we only focus on students and those who are enrolled, cannot reach everyone.
- Shifts focus to Households, so that everyone can be reached including students
- Aspect of family so important—even if a child receives a computer, parents may not know how to turn on the computer, access a hotspot, etc.
  - Importance of being able to teach digital literacy
- All the issues we see with technology are exacerbated by COVID—learning and other economic opportunities
  - Are we connecting people to the lifeline through broadband?
  - When we think about who is disconnected—the number is much higher when parents are non-English speakers there is a barrier to adoption at the front door.
    - Come from somewhere where they don't trust government
    - Need to engage and disarm people—rely on word of mouth.
    - When thinking about overall strategies? Maybe include privacy training as part of digital literacy

- When we think about student and household poverty in this community look at impacts to connectivity
  - Nina can share some work and studies on demographics including household poverty levels when student populations are taken out.
    - In general, need less dependency on AMI to base eligibility on other factors that impact ability to connect
- Consider outcomes that are different than deployment
  - After 2022 when network is established, how do we leverage it?
  - Consider how to use network for commerce, digital medicine, etc.
  - Envision the next step is to establish a Smart City network
    - Connect with organizations such as IGNITE, a nonprofit agency that leverages work.
- Need to consider what conversations we should be having about Utilities and other transportation infrastructure and consider what barriers are in place for infrastructure adoption
  - Think about how we have an integrated system
- Recognize that digital equity goes beyond individuals
  - Consider what digital equity means for businesses and their connectivity
  - Is there a way for digital equity to subsidize connectivity for nonprofits and nonprofit partners?
  - Consider changing building codes to include requirements for Broadband
- Francella ends by sharing a quote from a Boston City official about the importance of digital equity
  - "The work is not done. Everybody discovered over the last six months that connectivity is a must have, and people who may not have been that interested, or didn't see the immediate need are now pressed into understanding that we have a need for connectivity. We're scrambling to fill in those gaps of failed federal policies that have not made digital connectivity universally available or affordable to all"

Additional Discussion: *None*

Meeting adjourned by Mayor Troxell at 5:50pm