



Louisville Metro Government

601 W. Jefferson Street
Louisville, KY 40202

Action Summary - Tentative Committee on Equity and Inclusion

Chair Paula McCraney (D-7)

Vice Chair Anthony Piagentini (R-19)

Committee Member Barbara Shanklin (D-2)

Committee Member Jecorey Arthur (D-4)

Committee Member Kevin Kramer (R-11)

Committee Member Markus Winkler (D-17)

Committee Member Amy Holton Stewart (D-25)

Thursday, March 4, 2021

4:00 PM

Council Chambers/Virtual

Call to Order

Chair McCraney called the meeting to order at 4:03 p.m.

Roll Call

Chair McCraney introduced the committee members and non-committee members present. A quorum was established.

***NOTE: All committee members present attended virtually, except for Vice Chair Piagentini who attended in Chambers.**

Present: 7 - Committee Member Barbara Shanklin (D-2), Committee Member Jecorey Arthur (D-4), Chair Paula McCraney (D-7), Committee Member Kevin Kramer (R-11), Committee Member Markus Winkler (D-17), Vice Chair Anthony Piagentini (R-19), and Committee Member Amy Holton Stewart (D-25)

Clerk(s)

Sonya Harward, Clerk

Special Discussion

1. [ID 21-0194](#)

Broadband: Accessibility vs. Affordability - Jason Keller and Ellen Call, Charter/Spectrum; and Hood Harris and Hank Mangeot, AT&T Kentucky.

Attachments: [Presentation - Dedication to Diversity and Inclusion \(Spectrum\).pdf](#)

Hood Harris, AT&T Kentucky, spoke about the digital divide, the reasons for it, and how his company is addressing the availability, affordability, and adoption of internet services. He spoke about programs that are used to make internet service available to people with low income, and suggested that the benefits provided for mobile services expand to internet service and providing an electronic card, like that used for SNAP benefits, so that users can shop around for the provider of their choice.

Jason Keller, Spectrum, spoke about how his company invests in Louisville and how it invests in diversity within its company. He also spoke about the Spectrum Internet Assist program his company provides to families with free

and reduced lunch and seniors who receive supplemental security income. He also spoke about his company's work in diversity in its television services. He spoke about the work his company has done with the Louisville Metro Housing Authority and the Louisville Urban League. He also spoke about the Spectrum Community Investment Loan Fund his company is about to launch, which includes a \$1 million commitment to provide loans through Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFIs) to small businesses whose goods and services help meet core needs in under-served communities.

The following also spoke to this item:

- Chair McCraney
- Vice Chair Piagentini
- Committee Member Winkler
- Ellen Call, Spectrum
- Committee Member Arthur
- Committee Member Holton Stewart

The following was discussed:

- Broad question regarding why so many school kids do not have access to a computer and internet
- Problems with trying to bridge the digital divide include: not being able to afford a computer, tablet, etc. for the internet to be useful; providing public awareness about low-cost programs from Spectrum and AT&T and helping people sign up for the programs; and low-cost programs still being too expensive for some people, so something like a voucher program is needed
- Being comfortable with the level of access to internet before the pandemic, but the pandemic has forced the community to face the problem
- Infrastructure to provide the services is there -- Spectrum and AT&T Kentucky cover at least 99 percent of the infrastructure in Louisville, and there are at least 10 other companies that have communication franchises with Louisville Metro Government
- Emergency Broadband Benefits Program (EBB) enacted by Congress in December, \$3.2 billion to provide \$50 vouchers to families that have been impacted by the pandemic, lost their jobs, or already identified as low income, but when the funds run out there may be many families getting disconnected if Congress does not continue to fund this program -- possible opportunity to establish a program to make sure they can maintain the benefit
- Replicating the program at Parkway Place where Spectrum provided 600 people with free 200 Mbps internet access in other developments -- Louisville Metro Housing Authority was able to use CARES Act funding for a 1 to 2 year contract with Spectrum and Spectrum provided a bulk rate and rewired the site
- Providing used equipment from entities that are upgrading their equipment to be utilized across the community, and whether such programs exist
- What programs JCPS provided to augment the cost of internet for low-income students when they handed out the devices for the students -- JCPS cannot currently use E-rate funding to put internet in students' homes, and AT&T Kentucky has people trying to get this policy changed at the federal level
- Jason Keller will forward the rules for the use of the \$3.2 billion EBB program
- Spectrum has had conversations with JCPS regarding options like the one used at Parkway Place
- Trends regarding the lack of access, with rural areas having an availability problem and urban areas having affordability and adoption issues for those traditionally under-served, generationally those that did not grow up in a

household with the technology, and those with less education, and these tend to be the trends in urban areas no matter the city

- Civil Rights Act of 1866 and a settlement last month with communication companies that would not carry the shows of a weather channel owned by a Black man, and whether the leadership of communication companies contributes to the lack of access and affordability
- Number of Black employees - not available during the meeting but may be able to provide it
- Education programs, especially for seniors, to help them use devices - both companies spoke about the programs they provide
- \$1 million Spectrum Community Investment Loan Fund to be focused on areas Spectrum serves in Kentucky and the under-served areas, and how the Council can help identify small businesses that could use this opportunity
- Communication companies have no way of knowing who does not have internet service in their homes and possibly having programs in the community that can help identify these households in order to let them know what is available
- Question about free community wi-fi

Adjournment

Without objection, Chair McCraney adjourned the meeting at 5:01 p.m.