



City of Madison

City of Madison
Madison, WI 53703
www.cityofmadison.com

Meeting Minutes - Approved EDUCATION COMMITTEE

*Consider: Who benefits? Who is burdened?
Who does not have a voice at the table?
How can policymakers mitigate unintended consequences?*

Wednesday, February 10, 2021

5:30 PM

Virtual

CALL TO ORDER / ROLL CALL

Present: 7 - Linda Vakunta; Tag Evers; Nichelle Nichols; Christina Gomez Schmidt; ananda mirilli; Carousel Andrea S. Bayrd and Heidi Wegleitner

Absent: 1 - Shiva Bidar

Others present: Mary O'Donnell, Tariq Saqqaf, Alyssa Kenney, Sarah Edgerton, Chad Weise, Jeff Knutson, Nathan Beck, Richard McGregory

Mirilli called the meeting to order at 5:43 pm.

PUBLIC COMMENT

1. [64005](#) Public Comment - Education Committee February 2021

None.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion by Evers, seconded by Bayrd to approve the January 13, 2021 minutes.
Motion passed by voice vote.

DISCLOSURES AND RECUSALS

None.

NEW BUSINESS

2. [64006](#) Discussion of current internet/WI-FI accessibility and barriers for families
Sarah Edgerton, Chief Information Officer - City of Madison Information Technology
Alyssa Kenney - State of Wisconsin Public Service Commission
Chad Wiese and Jeff Knutsen - MMSD

Attachments: [WI Access presentation.pdf](#)

Evers introduced Alexis London the Executive Director of the Bayview Foundation. London shared the experiences of families and staff at Bayview. London expressed concern over increased barriers for communities of color and low-income families regarding internet access. Barriers families faced include connectivity issues, access to working devices, affordability, tech support and digital education.

Alyssa Kenney Director of Digital Access from the Wisconsin Broadband Office gave a presentation to the group. In Madison, it is not about availability of broadband service, but rather digital equity in regards to financial and technical barriers. It is critical that Madison address digital inclusion to reduce and eliminate barriers to access and use of technology. Kenney shared items the committee can focus on and support. These include 1) fund, support and train digital navigators using existing systems, 2) get the word out about the Emergency Broadband Benefit and start signing people up, and 3) get surplus devices cleaned, refurbished and in the hands of people who need them and use your buying power to purchase bulk accounts for students. Currently legislative requirements prevent municipalities from providing internet to residents without conducting studies and charging rates above current providers.

Sarah Edgerton, IT Director for the City of Madison, discussed City of Madison efforts on digital inclusion. Since 2016, the City of Madison has worked to provide more fiber to connect city facilities, libraries and some schools through contracts with service providers. Pilot projects in 5 neighborhoods were also conducted. Barriers to provide citywide internet access include internet provider/landlord contracts that prevent the city from providing its own service. The City of Madison cannot compete with large corporations when it comes to price, infrastructure, advertising and network capacity.

Edgerton shared work with CDA on providing internet to CDA residents. However, affordability was a barrier for residents. A lack of overall funding for internet improvement and accessibility is the biggest barrier to updating all the areas that need it. There are federal grants for rural areas, but not urban ones. It would take years and approximately \$170 million dollars to create the fiber build needed on all streets. There is also the issue of which City of Madison department would take the lead on such a project. The IT department was designed to provide internal support within the City's networks. There will be discussions on the roles of IT, Community Development and other City departments, such as libraries moving forward. Staff will also discuss how the City's Digital Access Committee and Education Committee could coordinate their work on this issue.

MMSD staff members Chad Wiese, the Executive Director of Building Services, and Jeff Knutsen, the Director of Technical Services, discussed barriers students, staff and families experienced. MMSD has 25,000 students all with devices as classes moved from in-person to virtual. MMSD distributed approximately 2,000 hotspots to families, but cell connections are still required for internet access. Barriers still remain and include internet capacity, connectivity issues between internet providers and residents and school facilities not yet connected.

Discussions included future proposals that may include shared position between City of Madison and MMSD or other collaborations.

Next Steps:

March meeting will be continued discussion of digital access, digital equity and digital inclusion.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Evers, seconded by Gomez-Schmidt to adjourn at 7:35 pm. Motion passed by voice vote.