

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

HIGHER EDUCATION

and

ENERGY COMMITTEE

of the

SUFFOLK COUNTY LEGISLATURE

Minutes

A regular meeting of the Economic Development, Higher Education & Energy Committee of the Suffolk County Legislature was held in the Rose Y. Caracappa Legislative Auditorium of the William H. Rogers Legislature Building, Veterans Memorial Highway, Smithtown, New York, on Wednesday, November 14, 2007.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Legislator Wayne Horsley - Chairman
Legislator Steve Stern - Vice-Chair
Legislator Tom Barraga
Legislator Ed Romaine
Legislator Vivian Vilorio-Fisher

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

George Nolan - Counsel to the Legislature
Joe Schroeder - Budget Review Office
Joe Muncey - Budget Review Office
Renee Ortiz - Chief Deputy Clerk of the Legislature
Ben Zwirn - County Executive's Office
Carolyn Fahey - Economic Development
Charles Stein - Suffolk Community College
George Gatta - Suffolk Community College
Sharon Cates-Williams - Chief Information Officer - Suffolk County
Brendan Stanton - Aide to Legislator Horsley
Debra Alloncius - AME
All other interested parties

MINUTES TAKEN BY:

Donna Catalano - Court Stenographer

(*THE MEETING WAS CALLED TO ORDER AT 2:13 P.M.*)

CHAIRMAN HORSLEY:

Good afternoon, everybody. Welcome to the Economic Development, Higher Education and Energy Committee Meeting. May we all please stand for the Pledge of Allegiance.

SALUTATION

CHAIRMAN HORSLEY:

And may we all stand for a moment of silence for those men and women who are protecting our freedoms across the seas, and also, for all those veterans who are in post-veteran status today that have -- have given their lives and times and freedoms for us.

MOMENT OF SILENCE

CHAIRMAN HORSLEY:

Thank you very much. Please be seated. Do we have any cards?

MS. CATALANO:

No.

CHAIRMAN HORSLEY:

All right. It appears that we have a very light agenda, however, our presentation is first class. So what I would like to do is call Sharon Cates-Williams who is the CIO from Suffolk County and who's got a title here, "Working With Our Wires, an Overview of the Long Island Wireless Initiative." I like the title. Sharon, that's great.

MS. CATES-WILLIAMS:

That's very catchy.

CHAIRMAN HORSLEY:

It is.

MS. CATES-WILLIAMS:

I was put on the spot, and that's what I came up with.

CHAIRMAN HORSLEY:

I'm very proud.

MS. CATES-WILLIAMS:

That's my marketing background. I'm finally using that degree.

CHAIRMAN HORSLEY:

We're all just -- we're overwhelmed. I would like to just add, though, in introducing Sharon is that I have been -- it's been my pleasure to be Sharon's co-chair for the last -- I guess it's been a year now. A year, wow. When you are having fun, huh? Abdomen it has truly been not only a pleasure, but it's been -- it has been a moment of admiration towards her, because she has certainly -- she has shown to me what -- not only what a technical person is all about, but also that she is someone that I feel is a first class act and really knows her business and has been determined to make a project -- and it's a difficult project -- to work. And I think that she'll do a much better job than I am in describing this project, but as we go along, maybe I'll interject at times. So, Sharon, why don't you tell us a little bit and update us on WIFI Long Island.

MS. CATES-WILLIAMS:

Okay. Thanks for that introduction, Wayne, and the check will be in the mail. So, as many of you

know, back in 2006, the County Executive, County Executive Levy, decided that he was interested in exploring turning all of Long Island -- at first, he was only considering Suffolk County -- wireless, an outdoor wireless project, which is totally different from bringing that WIFI indoors. So I always to try to make sure everybody's clear about this.

We're talking about making the space outside of your home wireless, not necessarily coming through the walls. However, that signal can penetrate through the windows, but it probably would not go very far. In order to be able to use that signal that would come from off of this outdoor WIFI network, you would have to have another device called a CPE device installed in your home, and, of course, there would be a cost for that device. So just so that we are all clear, this project is not in any way meant to compete with what we currently have in the home. It's actually meant to enhance our WIFI experience or our internet surfing experience or our ability to be mobile and access information when we're away from the home.

So an RFP was put out in January. And around April -- wow, it seems like a long time ago -- around April, we received seven responses. And the WIFI Committee, we went through those responses. And they were all quite interesting, because each and every one of them was very different. Your two main players in this WIFI space, EarthLink and MetroFi, they both responded to the RFP, but they were really looking for the County to put up a considerable amount of money in order to participate along with them, and it was in the tune of about \$35 million a year. Of course, we don't have that. Do we? So, of course, we immediately put those two to the side.

We also received a response from Cablevision. And you know who Cablevision is. Cablevision wanted the County to give up all of their telecom business to them. And, you know, you might say, well, what's so bad about that. Well, our phone system, although it works, it's actually not a system that was probably put out in 20th century. I guess that went over some people's heads. So if we were to make that move, again, the County would have to come up with a considerable expensive Capital Project in order to update our phone system so that we could then move to Cablevision. So that proposal did not work for us at all.

But when we read the proposal from E-Path, which is the vendor that we chose, it appeared that E-Path was giving us everything that we wanted. What we said we wanted was free WIFI in public spaces, the County was not going to put up any money, we didn't want to do anything, we were just going to make our -- our buildings available, and we asked for some technical specifications, E-Path responded and said that they would be able to do.

E-Path also came in with two pretty heavy hitting partners; one being KeySpan and the other one being Sysco. And, of course, Sysco is known in the industry for their equipment, their WIFI equipment. So we felt that that was the best proposal. And we did our due diligence, we checked their financials. And, of course, we looked at KeySpan and Sysco and anyone else that they were going to bring on board, and we decided that we were going to go with E-Path. And that decision was made over the summer.

Since then, both counties -- well, in between RFP and our announcing the vendor, Nassau County came on board with us. So we went from 900 square miles to a 1200 square mile project. But of course, as we started to eliminate open space or areas where it just would not make sense to do WIFI, the project shrunk down to 750 square miles, making it still one of the largest WIFI projects going on in the country.

So since the announcement, we embarked on a project of trying to find where would be a good pilot area. We had asked in the RFP that the vendor do a five mile pilot, two and a half square miles in Nassau, two and a half square miles in Suffolk. And since then, we have identified our two and a half square miles, and I believe each one of you have a map show you where that is. It runs along the 110 Corridor. Does everybody have a map? It runs along the 110 Corridor, it's going south from the LIE, crossing just over the Long Island Railroad tracks. It covers parts of Huntington, Babylon and Amityville Village.

Wayne and I had the pleasure of sitting down with the Supervisor of Babylon and a representative from Huntington, and also, we met with the Amityville Mayor, and all three were very excited about this project and are very much interested in seeing WIFI come into their communities. Prior to that, Wayne and I also went to the Patchogue -- to the Village of Patchogue, and we met with the Mayor there. And they're also excited. I have also had conversations with the Suffolk County Water Authority, with the Middle Country Library. I have civic associations calling me all the time from various towns and villages. And everybody is excited about WIFI and would like for us to begin implementation in their neighborhoods. We even have residents calling and offering to have these wireless access nodes installed on their property. Quite scary.

Now, I just want to tell you a little bit about these wireless access nodes, because I know people are concerned about the nodes, and people always think radiation and things like that. These nodes do not emit any more radiation than what you're currently experiencing now from your microwave that's in your home or from your cell phones. So it's not like X-rays, like when you go the doctor and they have to put the big metal sheet on your body. You're not going to be exposed like that. But we know that we can't always satisfy everybody's fear, because there's always the unknown. I mean, the reports that we have now say -- show that there are no health affects from WIFI, but there's always that caveat, you never know. But we do feel comfortable with WIFI, because it is a lower ban than what you're currently experiencing from cellular -- from the cellular towers.

Now, how do you install these WIFI nodes? They can install on street poles, lamps, because they require electricity. So that's all you need. All you need is a street light. You install these WIFI access nodes. They're about the size of maybe this folder right here. And they have maybe two or three antennas coming out of them, depending on what type of -- as we call -- cards are installed.

Now, by cards, I mean, we will have -- and just to simplify it, we will have two types of cards installed in these WIFI access nodes. One will be for residential use, for you and I to be able to take out laptops, surf the web. If you have a WIFI phone, to be able to make a phone call, things like that. The second card will be what we call a 4.9 card and that would be a card that would be used exclusively -- that frequency is used exclusively for Public Safety, for our Police Department, for Probation, things like that.

Now, it was important to us that E-Path, our vendor, install devices that could accommodate both. While our Public Safety Departments right now have their own network, this WIFI network would be a great backup for them just in case they would ever need to use it. Now I just want to tell you a really quick WIFI story. And I don't know how much time you're giving me, Wayne, but I have to tell the Minneapolis story.

We're all familiar with what happened, the tragedy in Minneapolis, with the bridge. And we spent days watching the rescue workers go into the water and try to retrieve as many survivors as they could. But while that was going on, there was a terrific WIFI story that was happening in the background that nobody knew about. What was going on in Minneapolis prior to that bridge falling down was Minneapolis was doing a WIFI installation right in their downtown. It's a six part project, and the first phase of it was completed, but it was not turned on.

So when the bridge collapsed, the same thing happened in Minneapolis that happened here in New York during 9/11. What happens? The first thing everybody does is they pick up their cell phones and you're trying to call your family. The cellular networks were so overwhelmed that the same thing happened there that happened here, which is it failed. No calls are through, no one is able to communicate. When the Chief Information Officer in Minneapolis realized this, she said, "Hey, let me turn on my WIFI," because she already had WIFI -- part of her installation installed. They turned on the WIFI. And what that did was that enabled anyone that has any kind of hand-held that can do text messaging, even your average cell phone that -- and, you know, all the kids do text messaging -- that enabled you to use the data portion of that network, and communication happened.

A thousand people started to use her installation as she had it. She was so overwhelmed within an hour that they had to increase it. And this is the beauty of WIFI, if you have to increase the capacity, all you have to do is go out there and install some more of those nodes. Simple as that. They install in probably a half an hour to install. Different from cellular, because as you know, if you need to increase capacity with a cell -- I don't need to go any further with that, you know what happens. I mean, it's just not easy. They were able to increase this capacity so that they could accommodate 6000 people within hours, not just the individuals, but the Public Safety workers that needed to get GIS maps out to individuals coming from other cities that were coming into town to help out with the bridge. They were able to send them maps -- maps showing them how to reroute and get around the city to void that bridge.

Wonderful. That's why they were able to respond so quickly, because that WIFI network came to the rescue. And that's why the residents were able to get in contact with their loved ones, because of that WIFI network. It's a great story. It's a story that a lot of people don't know, but us techies, we know all about that. And us WIFI people, we're jumping up and down, because that's exactly what WIFI can do for us in a disaster. When your cellular networks fail and when all else fails, you've got this other option that you can go to.

Now, of course, with our phones, most of us -- most of us do not have WIFI phones yet, but within the next three years, we all will. But your phones do have the capability to text, and that's the data portion. And that's the beauty of WIFI, because it can accommodate both voice and data. And the network that we're building accommodates both voice and data. Great story, right? It was pretty cool. So what else can I tell you about WIFI?

CHAIRMAN HORSLEY:

Okay. Let me just -- let me just ask a couple of quick questions. One of things that I was so impressed with is that when we put the RFP together how many people were involved across Long Island in putting this RFP process together from academics to business peoples to people who were working with the County, etcetera. Why don't you just give a quick overview of that process? I mean -- because I think it goes to show how much effort the County has put into this project itself.

MS. CATES-WILLIAMS:

When County Executive Levy originally announced the project, we were -- and he mentioned in his announcement that he was going to be putting together this WIFI Committee -- we were flooded with requests from individuals from all industries across the Island to participate in this project. And we sat down with Yakov Shamash at Stony Brook, and we started to look through some of these names, and it was really tough picking 15 people out of, you know, thousands -- well, not thousands, but hundreds of names. And a couple of people were really angry with us that they didn't get the opportunity to participate.

But we had representatives from Stony Brook, from Brookhaven National Lab, from Computer Associates, from Symbol, at the time it was Symbol. We had marketing representatives, we had a representative from the real estate industry, of course, education, not just -- beyond Higher Education, but Early Childhood Education. We had this huge brain trust of people that came together. And I was amazed by the first meeting that I learned so much. I thought I understood WIFI, but when these guys finished talking, I mean, my mind was spinning. I mean, they were talking about giga hertz and this and that and things that I didn't know. And I was taking notes feverishly because I knew I had to go back and brush up on the things that I didn't know. But, Wayne, you are absolutely right, it was an incredible --

CHAIRMAN HORSLEY:

They did it as a volunteer effort.

MS. CATES-WILLIAMS:

As a volunteer effort. And even -- we did --

CHAIRMAN HORSLEY:

Focus groups.

MS. CATES-WILLIAMS:

Focus groups, thank you.

CHAIRMAN HORSLEY:

I'll just finish your sentences, Sharon.

MS. CATES-WILLIAMS:

And that was a volunteer effort. You know, someone said, hey, maybe should do a focus group and bring in representatives from the County, you know, residents. And someone sitting at the table offered their space to do the focus group, another guy who is a marketing guy, and this is what he did, he offered to put the questionnaires together and to send them out. And, you know, we brought this focus group together, and he facilitated it and compiled all the information for us, and all of that was done for free.

CHAIRMAN HORSLEY:

Right. It was great.

MS. CATES-WILLIAMS:

It was really great.

CHAIRMAN HORSLEY:

And I thank them publically today for all that -- all that effort, the people behind the scenes that were the wind under our wings. Not that we're talking credit that this thing could be successful yet, but -- we don't want to go that far. But let me quickly -- the digital divide issue. I think that's important to -- to emphasize what that will do to the whole issue of -- explain what that is, and then let's go from there.

MS. CATES-WILLIAMS:

I'll use Wireless Philadelphia, because when Philadelphia decided -- and they were really the first to be recognized as the WIFI municipality that was -- as a municipality that was doing WIFI. And their reasons for doing WIFI was to bridge the digital divide. And the digital divide essentially means you want to bring the internet into the homes or into the lives of individuals who may not be able to afford a laptop or a computer, and therefore, do not have access to that information.

So what happens is you -- the vendor will make the WIFI affordable or available to the individuals, and then another vendor will come in or another company, such as a Microsoft or an Apple will come in and sponsor the equipment. And now, individuals who have not had the opportunity to interact with a PC internet and/or the internet, which as we know is really changing the way that our children are learning today, they will now have the opportunity to do that. We included that in our RFP. That was something that we wanted to see. We would like for E-Path to make available, whether it's free or at a very, very, very low cost, make this WIFI available, and then hopefully -- and we know that this is going to happen -- someone will come along and donate the equipment and also training and things like that. So bridging that gap is so important. And we don't want to lose focus on that, because that's where many of our residents are going to benefit from this, especially our kids.

CHAIRMAN HORSLEY:

Let me just -- I want to get a couple more pieces of information out there. The idea that this was originally told to be a free -- a free project and -- not only for the County, but for the people of Suffolk County and Long Island. Could you go over the pricing structure? How does E-Path make monies on this?

MS. CATES-WILLIAMS:

Okay. E-Path -- we asked for in the RFP a three-tier pricing structure, first tier, of course, being free. Our feeling is that in public space throughout Long Island, whether it's a park or a beach or it could just be an area that's designated a public space where people congregate, we feel that that space should be free. Now, the bandwidth, there will just be enough bandwidth to perhaps read e-mail and send an e-mail, okay? You won't be able to open up any Excel files and do any actual work.

The second tier of service would run anywhere from around \$30 or less. And that one would give you the ability to read e-mail, to open up files, to send data back and forth. And they will probably -- well, I won't say it, because I don't know if it's going to happen. The third tier is the one that businesses would be interested in. It's high bandwidth; graphic and charts will be able to come across. It will be really quick and really fast. That one may run anywhere under \$50. Now, right now, there is a vendor out there, and, you know, many of us use their product, and that product is priced anywhere from 45 to \$50. Now the difference between that and what we're offering is that product works off of the cellular network. So wherever there's a cellular presence, that's where you're able to pick up a signal. But the E-Path WIFI will, as we said, will run across 750 square miles, it will be contiguous, so your signal should travel with you wherever you go. Did that answer -- did that help you?

CHAIRMAN HORSLEY:

Thank you. Yeah, it does. One of the comments in the budgetary process when we put together the Omnibus Budget of Suffolk County was that there was a -- even though this project is going to cost \$130 million --

MS. CATES-WILLIAMS:

150.

CHAIRMAN HORSLEY:

150, okay. There you go. What do I know? One hundred and fifty million dollars. That the vendor is going to be putting up these dollars to put this projects in place. We did hire a consultant, Civitium, that there are some costs to that. Could you please just tell us what that company does for us and how they have assisted us in our process of getting us to this point.

MS. CATES-WILLIAMS:

Okay. The key to Civitium is the person who is working with Civitium is Diana Neff. Diana Neff is the former CIO of Philadelphia. She is wireless -- she is the Queen of Wireless. And Diana actually went thorough the process when she was doing WIFI for Philadelphia. And she brings with her -- we have another gentleman that works with us, Bailey White -- they are out there, and they're doing this for a living. So what they bring to the table is -- you know, when we think -- and this has happened to us on numerous occasions -- when we had a great idea and we thought, okay, this is how we should do it, Civitium is able to show us the pros and the cons of, you know, going in one direction versus going in another.

They not only have the experience from inception of, you know, starting a project like this and making the decision on whether or not you should decide to do a project like this. And actually, it would have been great if we had had Civitium way back when as a part of our brain trust, because, you know, they may have added some value to the table. I believe that they would have. But they also -- from contract negotiations to even how this thing should be implemented, they're the ones, they've done it, so they know how to do it. None of us have done it. I mean, this is virgin territory for all of us.

But what you need to understand is throughout the country, WIFI is happening in so many municipalities, and Civitium is right there. So they're right on the cutting edge. And we're quite fortunate that they've taken us on as a client. And, you know, we're really fortunate to have them. I don't know what else to say about that.

CHAIRMAN HORSLEY:

So budgetarily wise, it's about \$200,000?

MS. CATES-WILLIAMS:

Yes. That's what we think we'll need next year.

CHAIRMAN HORSLEY:

Okay. And that has been placed in the Omnibus Budget unless the County Executive lines it out or something. I don't anticipate that. I'm kidding. That was my joke.

MS. CATES-WILLIAMS:

Then I'll beg Diana.

CHAIRMAN HORSLEY:

That was my.

MS. CATES-WILLIAMS:

That was your joke? Okay. It was funny.

CHAIRMAN HORSLEY:

Okay. Please, would you -- there have been a lot of failures in WIFI across the United States. A lot of the ones that were first out of the box, they have now given up on WIFI because of the complications. The business model has changed. Could you just maybe give us a little detail on how we've changed our business model to facilitate where we should be at this point to make this thing successful?

MS. CATES-WILLIAMS:

That's a very good statement, Wayne. And I'm constantly asked if I had to do the RFP today, would it be the same RFP that we issued back in January, and answer is absolutely not. Just as quickly as we issued our RFP, the WIFI space began to change. Two years ago, municipalities were able to come out and say I want free WIFI and I want this and I want that. And because the Earth Links and the MetroFis were very eager to jump into this market place, because they realize that, you know, five, six years from now, WIFI is the one thing that we're all going to be using. It's like electricity. It's not going to go away, it's just going to get better.

So they jumped on the bandwagon and offered to self fund a lot of these locations. And what has happened was the initial design -- and, again, this was new territory for everyone -- so the Earth Links and MetroFis went out and they took a look and they said, okay, we think we're only going to need 15 access nodes per square mile. But what we found now is you need 30 access -- access nodes per square mile just a year later. And how did we find that out? Because when they installed those 15 access nodes, it's not enough capacity to support the users. So now they had to go back and add additional equipment, but they no longer have the funding to do that, because they haven't even started selling their subscriptions.

So what makes our projects -- we were able to learn from that, because when E-Path came up with a number of \$150 million, that includes 30 access nodes per square mile, okay? So a lot of the failures and a lot of the stories that we're reading are coming from the camps of really the Earth Links and the MetroFis because they don't have any funding to increase their implementations, what they have out there. They're now walking away from the projects and saying, "Okay, you know, what? We can't do this right now." Hopefully, these municipalities in their contracts had a clause in there that requires them to take that equipment down. We can only hope. But that's where a lot of the negative press is coming from.

And what companies like E-Path what they have to do is now -- you know, they have to go out and get funding. They're going to use some of their personal funds, you know, their company funds.

But they realize that, you know, what, we don't have enough. So in order to make this project successful, you are going to need a funding source that's coming in and that's, you know, being supportive of the project. And one of the biggest changes in the WIFI space is now they're requiring the municipalities to pledge to become anchor tenants, which is something in our RFP we said we didn't want to do. And by being an anchor tenant, that means that you are going to say upfront that I'm going to give you X amount of dollars per year in business. And that's just something there we -- we are not in a position to do.

We believe that there are other entities on Long Island that are better anchor tenants than us. So, you know, that's one of the major changes. And any municipality that I speak to now about WIFI that are thinking about this, I always make that clear to them, look, are you ready to become an anchor tenant. And if you're not, you need to say that upfront and also think about who you can offer up in your stead.

CHAIRMAN HORSLEY:

That's great. Thank you, Sharon. One last question, then I'm going to open it up to my colleagues. I just wanted to get some of this stuff on the record, because I think this is such an important story that it's kind of like drifted a little bit for people who aren't paying attention to it. And certainly, it's going to spring out there on the open, and we're going to have a system. So I want people to understand it before we get to the point. The pilot area itself, when do you anticipate that the pilot will actually be -- actually be erected and be up and running, and what can we expect of it, and, you know, that kind of stuff?

MS. CATES-WILLIAMS:

Well, I'm still hoping that the pilot for Suffolk County, that area, that 2.5 square miles will be up in December. I'm still hoping that that will happen. The only things that will hold that up is if the vendor is unable to negotiate the pole attachment agreements with the LIPAs and the Verizons. You know, they are the keepers of the poles. You know, they need these -- they need these pole attachment agreements in order to install the equipment. So they're in talks with them right now. So if all goes well, you know, December we'll start seeing this -- you know, this implementation.

Now, once it's up, we've already put together some -- you know, a testing mechanism, a way for us to test the network so that we can see how well it's working. You know, I just can't wait to do that. I'll take a couple of weeks off and just be on 110 with a laptop.

CHAIRMAN HORSLEY:

It's in Babylon. We think that's wonderful.

MS. CATES-WILLIAMS:

But, you know, we do want to test it. And we're going to be encouraging people to, you know, get out there and bang away at this thing, you know, and see how well it's working. All you need is your laptop. If your laptop already has a wireless card installed, which most laptops. Do for the past, you know, two years or so we've been buying them that way. You can just go out there. Once you turn your laptop on and you log in, you should see the signal. The signal -- your laptop should recognize that signal the same way that it does now when you're outside of your house and you're picking up your neighbor's signals. Yeah, I see that on your faces. It will pick up that signal, And then you'll just be able to log in to the internet.

CHAIRMAN HORSLEY:

And lastly, are you as optimistic today as you were when you first started this?

MS. CATES-WILLIAMS:

Yeah. Yes, I am. I am. Because you know why? I see how our youth interacts with technology, and I see how the consumer makes decisions, I watch the things that I do. We buy cars now that have gadgets in them. You know, they have to have DVDs, they have to have, you know, WIFI, things like that. I think there's a Chrysler commercial that's being played right now where the kids

turn around in the back seat and there's a table in the vehicle and there's multiple DVD screens. You know, I see kids that everybody had a phone, a Sidekick. People want to be connected all the time. Wayne and I, when we had our meeting with the Amityville Village Mayor, he came through the door with his iphone and showing us his iphone. I see people using technology, and people want more. They want more and more and more.

We have far advanced from the Get Smart shoe phone. Now we're all using these little flat phones. We want them smaller, we want them to be faster. Even in the home, people want faster internet. You know, we're never satisfied. We were satisfied, you know, three years ago with dial up, and now it's unheard of. So I believe that, you know, technology is always going to move forward. And the way that we work and interact with each other is changes. We see it now. So to have a WIFI network out there, it's going to happen, because the consumers are going to drive it.

CHAIRMAN HORSLEY:

Welcome to the cutting edge. Legislator Stern.

LEG. STERN:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Very exciting. I just have a few questions. So we talked a little bit about why some of the other companies have not been successful in dealing with municipalities. I don't know if I got the full story, though, or explanation on E-Path thinks that this will be successful.

MS. CATES-WILLIAMS:

Because E-Path -- we have put E-Path in front of companies and entities out here on Long Island. We're finding their clients, we're helping them find their clients. They know that anybody that has workers out in the field, whether it's someone -- if you have people out there that are reading meters and they're walking around -- have you ever seen a person read the meter at your house? They physically have to walk up to your house with a gadget and they have to get close to that meter to take that reading, and then they walk, walk, walk to the next house. I've observed this many times. But with WIFI, you don't have to do that. You can be in the office, hit a switch, and the meters will all read and send the reports back.

If you have a company like DHL and FedEx who you've got workers that are out in the field and they're delivering packages and things change and you need to get that message to them, right now, we use cell phones to do that. But suppose you're carrier is in area where, you know, you can't get to cell phone, and suppose that message is longer than you want to do on a cell phone, suppose it's the complete work order that you want to change, WIFI enables you to do that. So I think that E-Path recognizes that it's not just the network itself, but it's also the applications that come along with that. The two of them go hand in hand. And that's how they're selling this product. When they're out talking -- yes, E-Path stands there, and they talk about the network that they're going to install, but they have integrators standing right next to them, product integrators, that's explaining to say the Suffolk County Water Authority what automatic meter reading can do for them. And they understand that. Because being more productive and more efficient is what people want. So you will have real-time information.

LEG. STERN:

And maybe it's a chicken or egg, but if you have all of these companies and all of these industries who see the value in the network, what comes first, does E-Path have agreements with these companies in order to build the network or do they have to build the network first and then sign up customers next?

MS. CATES-WILLIAMS:

The old build the network and they will come.

LEG. STERN:

Obviously th investment to do that is tremendous. And is E-Path or any other company willing or

able to do just that?

MS. CATES-WILLIAMS:

Yes, they were. And so was EarthLink and so is MetroFi, they were willing to do it as well, because they know that the end result is good, it's profitable for them. The problem with the failed projects simply is a lack of funding, it's not that the network itself doesn't work. It's not a proof of concept. We know the concept works. It's just a funding issue for them. So that's why they now turned around and said to the municipality, look, we made a mistake, we need your help, can you -- can you pitch in. Now, how many municipalities do you think are going to do that? Our two proposals that we received, they wanted \$35 million from us. That's a lot of money. Yearly, that's a yearly amount.

LEG. STERN:

Is there an update -- I remember reading early on at the time of the announcement that there may be Federal assistance. I know Senator Schumer had been involved from the beginning.

MS. CATES-WILLIAMS:

We're still staying on top of that, but I have no update to report.

LEG. STERN:

Nothing there yet. I think everybody's fear is that we have a system and that it's up and running and everybody sees the value -- of course, business models constantly change -- whether or not we're going to continue to participate, you did such a good job of explaining the digital divide and how important it is -- to have this service certainly in certain areas throughout Suffolk County. And it's like anything else, once you give it, you can't take it away.

MS. CATES-WILLIAMS:

No.

LEG. STERN:

Because everybody's become so dependant on it. And then municipalities are left in that situation.

MS. CATES-WILLIAMS:

You know, just a comment on what you just said. Are you familiar with the library systems and how the libraries were providing free dial up to residents? And that service is going away on the 31st of this year. So the libraries quickly had to come up with another solution. You know, the County, we were flooded with letters. You know, help us, help us, we need the dial up. So you always have to come up with another option. But I think with the WIFI, because of the simplicity to install and to maintain this network, it's not going away, it's just going to increase.

LEG. STERN:

Now, this area here is the pilot area.

MS. CATES-WILLIAMS:

Yes.

LEG. STERN:

Is this pilot area also going to be considered a public area?

MS. CATES-WILLIAMS:

The pilot will be free.

LEG. STERN:

The pilot will be free.

MS. CATES-WILLIAMS:

Yes, it will be free. Now, whether it will remain free, that we haven't talked about. But it will be free while it's called the pilot.

LEG. STERN:

Again, bringing this service into certain areas throughout Suffolk County -- and, again, you make a very compelling case that we need to deliver the service to children and to families who certainly need that exposure and that experience. But are those public areas, are they slated to be public areas or are they not public areas and then they're thrown on the tier, and are they in the second tier or the third tier? They're not -- all of those areas aren't necessarily going to be considered a public area in order to be free.

MS. CATES-WILLIAMS:

What, the free portion?

LEG. STERN:

Yeah.

MS. CATES-WILLIAMS:

The free portion, they will be public areas, spaces where large amounts of people congregate. I mean, you don't want to -- you don't want to take that area there -- I mean, I can't say speak for E-Path. They may decide to keep that area free. You know, that's purely up to them. But what we want to keep in mind is E-Path will need to make money. So you don't want to take a potential revenue source away from them.

So when you say public space -- when we say public spaces, it's like a park. New York City is considering making Central Park available, because that's an area where people congregate. You know, if they have WIFI there, people will love it and more will come, and then vendors will make money, because people will be there, and, you know, they're buying stuff. You know, it's -- the two go hand in hand. So when we say public spaces, we mean the same thing, like a park or a beach, you know, an area like that. I can't imagine that we would pick an area where there's a potential for revenue for E-Path.

LEG. STERN:

Those families that may have difficulty to date --

MS. CATES-WILLIAMS:

That would be a different tier.

LEG. STERN:

That would be a different tier.

MS. CATES-WILLIAMS:

Yes.

LEG. STERN:

Different than the second or third-tier?

MS. CATES-WILLIAMS:

Yes. Because they're going to be getting --

LEG. STERN:

A two and a half tier. It's not the straight second -- tier or the straight third-tier? It's something different than that.

MS. CATES-WILLIAMS:

No. It's just going to be a special tier just for them.

LEG. STERN:

To allow them the ability, but it's not necessarily going to be considered a public area in order to be free.

MS. CATES-WILLIAMS:

Right.

MR. NOLAN:

Got it. All right. Thank you.

MS. CATES-WILLIAMS:

And then actually they may have to have a piece of equipment in the home, and you know, all the those details will have to be worked out.

LEG. STERN:

Very good. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN HORSLEY:

Thank you, Legislator Stern. Legislator Viloría-Fisher.

LEG. VILORIA-FISHER:

Good to see you, Sharon.

MS. CATES-WILLIAMS:

Good to see you.

LEG. VILORIA-FISHER:

It's always a pleasure. It's Good to listen to, you know, your -- all of the knowledge that you have in the area and especially your enthusiasm. It's always fun. And actually, the questions that I had were based on what I had read about failures in other municipalities. And I had been reading very carefully regarding Philadelphia and the digital divide and all of that. And I still am not convinced regarding the anchor tenants. Now -- because of that chicken. The pilot areas, are there now in place some entities that are providing that anchor for E-Path?

MS. CATES-WILLIAMS:

The bottom half of that map that you have, the residential area where it hooks, Suffolk Community Water Authority will be doing some testing --

LEG. VILORIA-FISHER:

Is the anchor.

MS. CATES-WILLIAMS:

Yes. They are the anchor. They will be testing an automatic meter reading software in that area. Yes. And in the Nassau -- now, I can't speak too much about the Nassau area. And I did not distribute their maps, because they recently changed them, but they are -- they are in talks with -- in the area that they're considering, there will be a possible anchor tenant there. They've asked me not to say anything until they've worked out all their details. But they're also including an anchor tenant in their pilot area as well.

LEG. VILORIA-FISHER:

Okay. And we're talking about area right now that the two anchor areas constitute how many square miles?

MS. CATES-WILLIAMS:

2.5 in Suffolk and 2.5 in Nassau, five miles all together.

LEG. VILORIA-FISHER:

Okay. So it's five square miles.

MS. CATES-WILLIAMS:

And let me just say, the Water Authority is testing. I don't know if they're going to be an anchor tenant, but they are a good potential anchor tenant. I just want to make sure we're all clear about that.

LEG. VILORIA-FISHER:

Sure, because we're talking about orders of magnitude here. We're talking about 750 square miles --

MS. CATES-WILLIAMS:

Yes. And that's why it's important --

LEG. VILORIA-FISHER:

-- and the number of anchors that we would need for that.

MS. CATES-WILLIAMS:

Yeah. And that's why it's important that, you know, they have a good experience. And not just them, but anyone else who -- you know, there are other companies that E-Path is talking to that will be doing some tests in that area. It's good -- it's important that they all have a good experience, because they could become anchor tenants for them.

LEG. VILORIA-FISHER:

Okay. Now, what happens if, in fact, we are not able to line up the anchor tenants? At what point will -- can E-Path pull out and say it's not sustainable?

MS. CATES-WILLIAMS:

We're not in contract with E-Path at all right now. There's nothing in writing. So if E-Path came to us tomorrow and said, you know, what, we changed our mind, we don't want to do it --

LEG. VILORIA-FISHER:

They can walk away and we can walk away.

MS. CATES-WILLIAMS:

Yes.

LEG. VILORIA-FISHER:

With no harm-no foul except for the \$200,000 to Civitium.

MS. CATES-WILLIAMS:

That's next year. So if they tell us tomorrow, we haven't spent it.

LEG. VILORIA-FISHER:

Okay. How long is the pilot for?

MS. CATES-WILLIAMS:

It will run anywhere from 45 to -- I would say 45 to 60 days, you know, we'll run it.

LEG. VILORIA-FISHER:

When it is beginning, Sharon?

MS. CATES-WILLIAMS:

Hopefully some time in December we'll be making the announcement.

LEG. VILORIA-FISHER:

Okay. You mentioned the tiers and you mentioned \$30. What's the unit, \$30 per?

MS. CATES-WILLIAMS:

Month.

LEG. VILORIA-FISHER:

Per month.

MS. CATES-WILLIAMS:

Yes. Those are monthly figures.

LEG. VILORIA-FISHER:

Okay. And now, again, going back to that concept of digital divide and having access, giving a greater number of people in our population access, you mentioned something about including provisions in the RFP that would provide for seeking a partner that would provide hardware to people.

MS. CATES-WILLIAMS:

In the RFP, we mentioned that we were interested in a proposal that would address bridging the gap, bridging the digital divide gap. So E-Path will have to -- they told us during our RFP review that they were on board with that and they were really interested in doing that. So what will have to happen is E-Path will then have to partner with a vendor, a hardware vendor, who will provide the hardware, because, again, remember, E-Path is going to provide the connectivity, but you are still going to need someone who is going to provide that hardware, and they won't be doing that.

LEG. VILORIA-FISHER:

And I wonder if we're in the same kind of area that Philadelphia presented to partners and that kind of bridging the divide concept.

MS. CATES-WILLIAMS:

I think we have -- I think we have some areas where we need to bridge the digital divide on Long Island.

LEG. VILORIA-FISHER:

We clearly do, but Philadelphia has a higher profile in that and concentrations where they are an urban area, which, you know, would reach a greater number of people with a smaller number of square miles, where, you know, a suburban sprawl -- it's a different challenge.

MS. CATES-WILLIAMS:

Yeah, but Apple is already out here on the Island, and they've already partnered with many of the school districts. And they're doing exactly that, they're providing the hardware to the students in the schools.

LEG. VILORIA-FISHER:

Okay. And when you said before that there would be a special tier, now, would that be based on individual need? It sounded like that's what you were saying to Legislator Stern.

MS. CATES-WILLIAMS:

I believe that that's the only way that you could do that. That's the model that Philadelphia has used.

LEG. VILORIA-FISHER:

Okay. On individual need. Within a certain catchment area, then the hardware would go to those individuals within that area that has been provided with the wireless?

MS. CATES-WILLIAMS:

Yes.

LEG. VILORIA-FISHER:

Okay. Thank you.

MS. CATES-WILLIAMS:

Yeah. I mean, that's got to be an arduous task for someone to figure out. It won't be Wayne or I.

LEG. VILORIA-FISHER:

Just the whole process, it will be amazing. Thank you, Sharon.

MS. CATES-WILLIAMS:

Thank you.

CHAIRMAN HORSLEY:

All righty. Thank you very much, Legislator Viloría-Fisher. Any there any further questions? You know, I guess there was one question that Legislator Stern had, going back to the digital divide issue, do you anticipate -- I think I misunderstood even. You said that there's -- even though they may -- certain peoples may be eligible for the digital divide fee, is there a fee for that. Is that what you're --

MS. CATES-WILLIAMS:

E-Path may waive the fee and it may be free.

CHAIRMAN HORSLEY:

I think that's where Legislator Stern was --

MS. CATES-WILLIAMS:

See, I don't know how they plan on handling that. Yeah. I would imagine -- I mean, I think that there was -- not an E-Path proposal, but I did read someone else's proposal, and they were offering to charge \$10 per month, you know, part as of their digital divide.

LEG. STERN:

So there may be no fee, that would be within E-Path's discretion. Or there may be a reduced fee to make it affordable to those who need the service.

MS. CATES-WILLIAMS:

Yeah. It would definitely have to be reduced or else there's no point.

LEG. STERN:

Sure. Exactly.

CHAIRMAN HORSLEY:

It was certainly one of the criteria that County Executive Levy recommended and, you know, asked for. I want to make sure there's a free service there for those that are in need. So I think that it's something that needs to be further discussed.

MS. CATES-WILLIAMS:

You know, on the -- to the County Executive's credit, he took lot of time, he worked with us in looking at this RFP, and he went through all of the requirements that we were asking for, and he did insist that we out the digital divide in there. He also insisted that we include a piece where the vendor had to include a minority or a woman-owned business as a part of the implementation plan. So, you know, he -- it was a pretty complete comprehensive RFP.

CHAIRMAN HORSLEY:

Excellent. Okay. Is there anything else you would like to ask. Sharon, thank you very much. I guess were on for tomorrow's phone call conversation, our weekly conversation with the world. And thank you very much for being here today --

MS. CATES-WILLIAMS:

Thank you for listening.

CHAIRMAN HORSLEY:

-- and elaborating to this Legislature. And I think they've got to be updated as this process moves through its stages.

MS. CATES-WILLIAMS:

It would be my pleasure.

CHAIRMAN HORSLEY:

Good. Excellent.

MS. CATES-WILLIAMS:

And thank you, Wayne, for being the best partner that I could have ever imagine having. You know more about WIFI then you let on.

CHAIRMAN HORSLEY:

I talk the talk.

MS. CATES-WILLIAMS:

Thank you. Have a good day.

CHAIRMAN HORSLEY:

Thank you. We're moving on to our agenda. I know Ways and Means is anxious to get the horseshoe. And moving to Introductory Resolutions.

2111, Appoint member to the Suffolk Community College Board of Trustees (Avette D. Ware).

CHAIRMAN HORSLEY:

I don't think she is here. Is that true? Avette? Maybe we got our wires crossed somewhere along the line. Okay. So I guess we'll make a motion to table by Legislator Viloría-Fisher.

LEG. STERN:

Second.

CHAIRMAN HORSLEY:

Seconded by Legislator Stern. All in favor? Opposed? So moved. **TABLED (VOTE:3-0-0-2 - Not Present - Legis. Romaine and Barraga).**

All right. I believe we have one more resolution, which was tabled -- okay. Would anyone else like to be heard? I see our college is back there, anything you guys want to bring to our attention? You guys good? It'd always a pleasure to see you back there, guys. Carolyn, you are good? All right. Motion to adjourn, seconded by Legislator Stern. All in favor? Opposed? So moved.

(*THE MEETING WAS ADJOURNED AT 3:04 P.M.*)

{ } DENOTES BEING SPELLED PHONETICALLY