

Offered by Councilor Kenzie Bok, Breadon, Mejia, Arroyo, Lara, Worrell, Fernades-Anderson, Flaherty, Murphy, Louijeune and Flynn



## CITY OF BOSTON IN CITY COUNCIL

### ORDER FOR A HEARING REGARDING MUNICIPAL BROADBAND FOR THE CITY OF BOSTON

*WHEREAS:* The City of Boston should use the public right-of-way to build out a municipal broadband network, to secure affordable and high-quality internet access for all Bostonians; *and*

*WHEREAS:* Internet is becoming for the modern city as essential a public utility as water and sewer, yet too many Bostonians without it are locked out of school, public meetings, critical information, and key services; *and*

*WHEREAS:* Consistent high-speed internet is fast becoming a core piece of economic development infrastructure for which cities are judged by businesses and potential residents alike; *and*

*WHEREAS:* One option the city should explore to establish municipal broadband is the expansion of the BoNet work already done to lay fiber connections between many municipal buildings; *and*

*WHEREAS:* BoNet is a fibre to node (FTTN) system that currently connects 270 sites, all of which are municipal buildings such as schools and libraries; *and*

*WHEREAS:* BoNet is a “dark fiber” network, meaning it utilizes fiber that is not connected to any internet service provider (ISP), and as of 2014, was saving the city around \$2,428,000 annually; *and*

*WHEREAS:* As Susan Crawford details in *Fiber: The Coming Tech Revolution—and Why America Might Miss It*, fiber optic cables are consistently some of the most effective and long lasting ways of transporting data and the process of installing fiber optic cables is important for any city attempting to create municipal broadband; *and*

*WHEREAS:* While the installation of fiber is quite expensive, models that claim municipal broadband is not cost-effective are based on short time horizons and don’t take into account the enormous but difficult-to-calculate benefits of more efficient access to knowledge; *and*

*WHEREAS:* The United States is falling behind many other countries in terms of internet access and speed, with South Korea, Japan, China, Singapore, Hong Kong, and many Nordic countries all having close to 100% fiber coverage; *and*

*WHEREAS:* Several municipalities in the United States are taking a leadership role in improving broadband access for their residents, including Chattanooga, Tennessee, Wilson, North Carolina, Santa Monica, California, and Otis, Massachusetts; *and*

*WHEREAS:* Throughout the legislative sessions of 2020 and 2021, and particularly during the Boston City Council's Legislative Budget Review process for fiscal year 2022, the Boston City Council has advocated for municipal broadband; *and*

*WHEREAS:* In June and July of 2021, the Boston City Council took an unprecedented leadership role and passed a supplementary budget utilizing funds awarded to Boston under the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), which included funding for a study of municipal broadband investments; *and*

*WHEREAS:* One way to pilot municipal broadband would be to extend the City's fiber network to the household level in Boston Housing Authority developments; *and*

*WHEREAS:* Private companies have had too much control in the regulation of broadband to date, and we must move past costly private control of the internet, a critical resource, for the sake of democratic equality; *NOW THEREFORE BE IT*

*ORDERED:* That the appropriate committee of the Boston City Council hold a hearing to discuss moving towards municipal broadband for the City of Boston, including progress towards the study on municipal broadband funded in the City Budget for Fiscal Year 2022, and that representatives from the Department of Innovation and Technology, the Boston Human Rights Commission, and the public be invited to testify.

Filed on: January 20, 2022