

Offered by Councilors Kenzie Bok, Ed Flynn, Julia Mejia, Flaherty, Arroyo, Baker, Breadon, Fernandes Anderson, Louijeune and Murphy



CITY OF BOSTON IN CITY COUNCIL

ORDER FOR A HEARING TO DISCUSS DIGITAL EQUITY AND MUNICIPAL BROADBAND IN RELATION TO AFFORDABLE HOUSING IN THE CITY OF BOSTON

WHEREAS, Reliable high-speed internet is becoming for the modern city as essential a public utility as water and sewer, yet too many Bostonians without it can be locked out of work, school, public meetings, telehealth appointments, business opportunities, access to critical information, modes of social connection, and key services; *and*

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

WHEREAS, Improving digital equity in our city has been a priority for the Boston City Council, which successfully pushed to fund a Digital Equity Assessment and analysis of the potential for Municipal Broadband in the FY22 city budget; *and*

WHEREAS, This report, completed in September 2022, describes the landscape of digital equity in Boston, identifies remaining gaps, and offers a series of recommendations, including several ways that Boston can increase resources for digital access through close coordination with the state government; *and*

WHEREAS, The report also recommends accelerating enrollment of Bostonians in the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP), to which end the Boston City Council appropriated \$2 million of federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds to Tech Goes Home's work with community-based organizations; *and*

WHEREAS, The report offers a high-level cost estimate of implementing a municipal broadband "fiber to the premises" (FTTP) system at \$824.9 to \$961.4 million dollars, but this sum would be considerably less if specifically focused on providing high-quality fiber to the premises of affordable housing developments in Boston, or to the specific areas of the City identified as experiencing non-competitive service; ***NOW, THEREFORE BE IT***

ORDERED: That the appropriate committee of the Boston City Council hold a hearing to discuss the findings of the Boston Digital Equity Assessment published in Fall 2022, and that representatives from the Department of Innovation and Technology, Tech Goes Home, and the public be invited to testify.

Filed on: February 13, 2023