



For Immediate Release

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Portsmouth Takes Next Steps to Become a Smart City Develops Citizen Connectivity Study

(PORTSMOUTH, VA – August 6, 2018) – The Portsmouth City Council is taking the next steps to make the historic port city a smart city. Earlier this year, the city implemented a fiber design master plan and an RFP (Request for Proposal) was issued to construct a community broadband network. The broadband project encompasses 55 miles of state-of-the-art fiber optics designed to increase internet connectivity around the city. City leadership has now re-engaged Federal Engineering Inc. (FE) and its subcontractor Magellan Advisors (FE/Magellan Team), the nation’s leading broadband and smart city development firm, to create a Citizen Connectivity Study. The study will be focused on using the City’s planned fiber-optic backbone network:

- as a platform for digital inclusion initiatives
- a driver for economic development
- for support of efficient municipal operations, and
- to increase the area’s quality of life

Through the proposed Citizen Connectivity Study, the consultants will survey households and businesses to understand how they currently use technology and the importance of digital high-speed connectivity. Survey results will reveal the benefits of and barriers to technology use, particularly available internet access options. Working with City departmental leaders, the FE/Magellan Team will engage key stakeholders, from major businesses to neighborhood champions, to define current gaps and goals. A series of workshops will be conducted to gather input and learn about connectivity needs and opportunities. The insights and anecdotal evidence from these discussions will allow for deep insights into what connectivity means for Portsmouth’s citizenry in today’s global digital economy.

The FE/Magellan Team will supplement its extensive knowledge from designing Portsmouth’s new fiber-optic network with research into other regional network infrastructure. The area has numerous large entities that own infrastructure, in part because it is a major pass-through area for the east coast and termination points for undersea cables. Network service providers are invited to share connectivity issues they have encountered and how they might help address community needs.

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Portsmouth's community broadband network will include connections to community anchor institutions such as hospitals, higher education centers, and will serve as a catalyst to narrow the digital divide and regional broadband initiatives. Construction began in July. Daniel Jones, chief information officer for the city of Portsmouth said the project is a five-year build-out that will make Portsmouth a digital port. The community broadband network is a \$9 million multiphase capital project.

"The Citizen Connectivity Study will provide precise information on what businesses and citizens actually need when it comes to high-speed internet connectivity," said Jones. "Our project will connect all municipal facilities including schools and the broadband network will improve municipal operations at a substantial cost savings."

The study will be conducted in conjunction with a new Smart City study group being established by the City. The consultant will engage with the community through this group, as well as local associations, civic leagues and businesses. Results from the surveys, discussions, and infrastructure inventory will be analyzed along with input from these groups to establish a strategy and action plan for the City. The connectivity study is expected to be completed over the next five months.

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