UNC
SCHOOL OF GOVERNMENT

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To: Roger L. Stancil, Town Manager
        Flo Miller, Deputy Town Manager
        Bob Avery, IT Director

From: Shannon Howle Schelin, PhD

Date: November 14, 2006

Re: Chapel Hill Wireless Study

On November 13, 2006, an exploratory meeting was held at the Town of Chapel Hill to discuss the Town's interest in pursuing a wireless strategy. The goal of the meeting was to determine a strategy for investigating the broad issues related to a wireless initiative in the Town, as well as to seek the in-kind support and expert guidance of the University of North Carolina (UNC), the UNC School of Government (UNC SOG), and the NC League of Municipalities (NCLM). External participants participating in the meeting included John Streck, UNC, Shannon Schelin, UNC SOG, and Lee Mandell, NCLM. Internal staff members participating in the meeting included Roger Stancil, Flo Miller, Bob Avery and Arek Kempinski.

The preliminary minutes and associated outcomes of the meeting are offered for your review and comment.

The external participants were briefed on the interest of Town Council and citizen advocates in pursuing a wireless strategy for Chapel Hill. The majority of the conversation centered on the "why" question—as in "why is Chapel Hill interested in undertaking such an effort?" The drivers for the wireless strategy were articulated as follows:
1. Addressing the digital divide;
2. Increasing citizen access (in-home service)
3. Increasing mobility (ubiquitous access in public areas—i.e. downtown);
4. Improving governmental operations (public safety and public service); and,
5. Economic development.

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Based on the conversation, the following suggestions and commitments were made by UNC, UNC SOG, and NCLM

1. The interest of the Town Council and citizen advocates does not specifically presume a "wireless" solution, but rather, a "connectivity" solution of which wireless is one component.

2. The "why" question is multi-faceted and each component needs to be studied individually in order to create a comprehensive connectivity plan.

   a. For example, licensed radio frequency (4.9 GHz, etc) is a robust, 802.16 alternative that is specifically designed for public safety and public service but is unavailable for citizen use. However, the lack of interference that is provided by the licensed spectrum creates significant advantages in data speed, accuracy, reliability, and security—all of which are vital to the development of any mobile government applications.
   b. Another example is the extension of a wireless network into low-wealth communities without the provision of equipment used to access the network will not have the desired impact upon the community.

3. The external participants, UNC, UNC SOG, and NCLM, agreed to work as a team, with the involvement of the Town staff, to examine the components and drivers of the "connectivity" request that has been generated by Town Council and citizen advocates. The outcome of this work will be a comprehensive listing of the drivers and requisite solution alternatives for each issue.

4. The request to identify additional drivers associated with the connectivity request was made at the close of the meeting and will be gathered by Town staff through conversations with Council Members.

5. The team will convene to begin its work after the Thanksgiving break.

6. In addition, upon completion of the plan, the team will advise the Town Council and staff on the technological, financial, and legal issues surrounding the various solutions that will compose the Connectivity Plan.

Additional feedback or comments on this meeting or the steps outlined for proceeding are appreciated.