

EX12.2.5

To the City Clerk:

Please add my comments to the agenda for the January 23, 2020 Executive Committee meeting on item 2020.EX12.2, Digital Infrastructure Plan - Update.

Please also publish these comments so they are readable on your web page that references this agenda item.

I understand that my comments and the personal information in this email will form part of the public record and that my name will be listed as a correspondent on agendas and minutes of City Council or its committees. Also, I understand that agendas and minutes are posted online and my name may be indexed by search engines like Google.

Comments:

Two items to note for the committee to reflect and direct inclusion into the planning process:

1) Agility and capacity to make recommendations to Council does not appear to be baked into your planning.

Issues such as facial recognition will clearly come up before the 2022 complete date. What plans do you have to guide decision making as your process unfolds?

There have been numerous precedents happening in other cities that provide examples of the challenges and how issues appear over night.

One only has to look at the arrival of Uber to Toronto as an example proving that the digital community does not see government process as an impediment to setting up shop and, by their actions, demanding answers from government well before they are prepared to address them.

You have here an opportunity to get ahead of the curve if you build in redress of digital issues - even if preliminary directions only.

I encourage the Executive Committee to request the Digital Infrastructure Plan to contain coverage/ documentation of what is known to be on the way and provide a preliminary actions assessment. This would include facial recognition, driverless vehicles, surveillance, etc.

In addition, the Sidewalk Labs/Waterfront Toronto development provides ample opportunity to outline the issues the plan must help resolve.

2) The sense of urgency around digital - including digital rights is not apparent. I encourage the Executive Committee to direct that community engagement be enlarged to have the working personnel go out to where citizens go. This would include libraries, shopping malls, etc.

Staged sessions at community centres and civic buildings has its place but not to the exclusion of more trafficked areas. Many citizens are uninformed and could more easily be engaged if your current info boards were visible and supported by City staff inviting dialogue around the city - north, east, west and south.

As a platform, the plan resonates but my concern is that the nature of already on the road “digital life” will intrude far before the planning process can be completed.

Citizens need to be invited to comment on their views and thoughts around privacy and digital surveillance. The plan is not specific enough in stating these as issues. If you go a bit further to include examples of what is imminent and what the government is facing, it will provide much more detail for decision making.

The aim should be to engage in the thousands not the below 100 of the current sampling.

To leave these aspects out for another time or place, will see both community and government minus a deep enough dive into the extremely vital areas that will change everything from how people live in the city to how the city is run. The “dive” has to happen as part of planning - not after.

Thank you for your consideration of these suggestions.

Keith McDonald

Keith McDonald

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