Staff Report

CITY WI-FI

December 14, 2010

At the September 8, 2009 Council meeting, City staff provided a report on the status of Wi-Fi services now being offered by the City of Ames. At that time, only the outdoor locations were installed and operating. Council asked City staff to report back on the Wi-Fi utilization and status of the system.

Background

The FY 2006/07 program budget included a City Council goal to "Facilitate One Community Through Both Physical And Relationship Connections." One objective for that goal was for City staff to conduct a city-wide Wi-Fi feasibility study. The study was completed in 2007. Based on the results of the study, Council chose to implement a pilot project that included implementation of a series of Wi-Fi hotspots, funded by the City with Wi-Fi access provided free of charge to the public.

Potential Wi-Fi hot spot locations were selected based on use of existing City infrastructure and review of expected public use in different locations. In order to prioritize locations, the following evaluation ranking was used:

Priority	Description
A	Wi-Fi supports benefits beyond public access
B	Year round traffic, facilities sufficient to allow for laptop use
C	Seasonal traffic, facilities sufficient to allow for laptop use
D	Seasonal traffic, facilities might be sufficient to allow for laptop use

The following locations were then scored using this criteria:

Location	Priority	Location	Priority
Campus Town Court	A	Tom Evans Plaza	B
City Hall	A	Ada Hayden Heritage Park	C
Community Center	A	Ames Youth Sports Complex	C
Brookside Park	B	Bandshell Park	C
Country Gables Park	B	Emma McCarthy Lee Park	C
Furman Aquatic Center	B	Moore Memorial Park	C
Ice Arena	B	Daley Park and Greenbelt	D
Municipal Pool	B		

Staff recommended the implementation of Wi-Fi hotspots in locations with existing or planned City network infrastructure and four pilot locations. The City infrastructure locations are primarily indoor locations used year round, have large public use, or would test the technology. The outdoor pilot locations would test the feasibility and public utilization of Wi-Fi hot spots before consideration of expanding the number of hot spots. Locations chosen for the pilot project included the following:

Pilot Outdoor Locations	City Infrastructure Locations
Tom Evans Plaza	City Hall
Brookside Park	Ice Arena
Campustown Court	Community Center
Hunziker Youth Sports Complex	Municipal Pool
	Furman Aquatic Center

Additionally, it was determined that locations with existing or planned network infrastructure would be installed and managed by the City. For other locations, the City would issue a request for proposals (RFP) to install, maintain, and operate the pilot Wi-Fi hotspots. The locations included in the RFP were Tom Evans Plaza, Brookside Park, Campustown Court, and the Hunziker Youth Sport Complex. Council ultimately approved entering into a contract with Ames-based ICS Technologies to provide service at these locations.

Current Status

The outdoor sites installed by ICS were all up and running by the winter of 2008. The first wide-spread advertising of the availability of Wi-Fi was done with the distribution of the 2009 Spring/Summer Parks and Recreation Guide in early spring 2009. A standard logo to identify City Wi-Fi was developed, was included in the Parks and Recreation Guide, and has been posted at each hotspot site. The City also held a "Wire-Cutting Celebration" on May 28, 2009 to provide additional public notice of Wi-Fi availability. There were several media reports on the new service.

The City infrastructure locations were up and running by the fall of 2009. City staff manages Wi-Fi hotspots located at City Hall, the Ames/ISU Ice Arena, the Community Center, Furman Aquatics Center, and Municipal Pool. The wiring and access points for these Wi-Fi hotspots serve both City staff and the public.

All locations have operated with minimal problems with one exception. When trees at Brookside Park become fully leafed out, there are interference problems with the Wi-Fi nodes there. There have also been electrical problems as breakers are turned on and off for various lighting systems in the park. The Information Technology Division worked with ICS and identified a solution that resolved the leaf issue, but use of the Brookside Park Wi-Fi location continues to be impacted due to periodic electrical problems.

The chart below provides information on usage of the public system:

Wi-Fi Location	Statistics Since	Average Monthly Logins	Average Monthly Unique Users	Average Monthly Session Time (minutes)
Tom Evans	January 2009	553	98	117
Brookside	January 2009	31	13	30
Hunziker YSC	January 2009	18	8	18
Campustown	January 2009	1,247	125	145
City Managed	December 2009	967	236	86

The current Wi-Fi hotspot locations will be maintained unless other direction is provided by City Council. If Council desires to expand to additional locations, staff will report back with cost estimates. The cost for the current locations is estimated at $13,187 for the upcoming fiscal year.