



TOWN OF FAIRFAX

STAFF REPORT

April 6, 2022

TO: Mayor and Town Council

FROM: Michele Gardner, Town Clerk

SUBJECT: Adopt a Resolution in Support of the Digital Marin Strategic Plan

RECOMMENDATION

Adopt the proposed resolution in support of the Digital Marin Strategic Plan.

BACKGROUND (Provided by Marin County Information Services and Technology)

In 2019, the Marin County Board of Supervisors approved one-time funding for development of a digital infrastructure strategic plan to ensure affordable, safe, reliable, and resilient broadband access to everyone in Marin. At the same time, the Marin County Civil Grand Jury released the [Marin's Telecommunications Disconnect Report](#) underscoring the need for improved leadership and coordination of telecommunications efforts. The initiative, known as Digital Marin, became a collaborative effort involving representatives from every sector including residents, business, education, government, healthcare, non-profits, utilities, and technology providers. From the outset, the project envisioned a future where everyone in Marin has access to affordable, reliable, resilient, and safe broadband with robust devices, technical support, and the digital literacy needed to take part in an ever-increasing digital world.

A digital needs assessment process was conducted through community outreach. This approach created collaborations among Marin's residents, businesses, and public and private sectors that will serve us well moving forward. The needs assessment better defined where Marin is experiencing the digital divide. While residents in five geographic areas - the Canal Neighborhood, Marin City, two areas in Novato, and West Marin – most disproportionately experience it, so do Marin's older adults and persons with disabilities. Findings also showed that lack of availability or competitive options, inconsistent service levels and pricing, and other barriers exist to varying degrees throughout Marin, even in affluent areas.

The resulting Strategic Plan is the roadmap to move Marin from where we are today to a better digital future by creating leadership, governance, collaboration, and actions that advance broadband deployment and digital adoption. Specifically, four goals with enabling strategies were developed.

1. High-quality broadband is available to everyone in Marin.
 - a. Assist with the deployment of universally accessible public and public/private broadband services throughout Marin
 - b. Improve the quality, reliability, resiliency, and safety of Marin's broadband services
 - c. Increase access to affordable broadband service
2. Everyone in Marin can take advantage of all online opportunities.

- a. Coordinate and expand digital literacy training in Marin
 - b. Expand community-based programs to provide end user devices and support
 - c. Help organizations create easy to use digital services that work for everyone
3. Marin has a high rate of digital adoption that benefits everyone.
 - a. Improve privacy, security, and digital accessibility across Marin
 - b. Address barriers through education and community problem solving
 - c. Increase public value from investments in technology
 4. Marin has a community driven organization with a mission to deliver broadband for all.
 - a. Obtain funding and create an independent operating entity

Creation of the Plan was made possible by a cross-sector Executive Steering Committee, a large, diverse group of stakeholders, and the project's consultant, Magellan Advisors. It is better because of the advice, input, and feedback of over 3,000 Marin residents, business owners, community advocates, and employees from government, education, and other industries.

DISCUSSION

The County of Marin is seeking the support of every city and town in Marin County to adopt the [Digital Marin Strategic Plan](#) as Marin's digital roadmap. Achieving this support is important to secure Federal, State, and local funding to ensure that Digital Marin can address gaps in digital services and reduce redundant spending and projects. The attached February 22, 2022, staff report from San Anselmo Planning Director Elise Semonian, who served on the Digital Marin Executive Steering Committee, provides more information about the Plan and its development. Of particular interest for Fairfax is her reference to addressing public concern regarding wireless technology (e.g., 5G):

Digital Marin did receive concerns from residents regarding wireless technology and the plan includes consideration of "all options including underground and aerial fiber, fixed wireless, wave broadband, satellite, and other available and emerging technologies" to assist with deployment of universally accessible public and public/private broadband service.

FISCAL IMPACT

None. Adopting the Strategic Plan does not result in a financial commitment. Federal, State, and local funding sources will be pursued by the County to fund resulting projects.

ATTACHMENTS

- A. Proposed Resolution
- B. San Anselmo Staff Report of February 22, 2022

RESOLUTION 22-__

**RESOLUTION OF THE TOWN COUNCIL OF THE TOWN OF FAIRFAX
IN SUPPORT OF THE DIGITAL MARIN STRATEGIC PLAN**

WHEREAS, the internet is a fundamental element of our lives and from our economy to education, it provides us with access to opportunities and critical services; and

WHEREAS, the COVID pandemic and other recent disruptive events underscore Marin's need to end internet access inequities and bridge the digital divide - the economic, educational, and social inequalities between those who have computers and online access and those who do not have it; and

WHEREAS, students in Fairfax need reliable home connections for distance learning, families need online access to information and support services, and our businesses and growing remote workforce demand more from internet providers to remain competitive; and

WHEREAS, the Town of Fairfax envisions a future where everyone in Marin has access to universally available, affordable, reliable, resilient, and safe broadband with robust devices, technical support, and the digital literacy needed to take part in an ever increasing digital world; and

WHEREAS, the Town seeks to serve residents, businesses, and other organizations better through public and private collaborations and sharing of data and resources; and

WHEREAS, in 2019, the Marin County Board of Supervisors approved development of a Digital Infrastructure Strategic Plan, which became the Digital Marin project; and

WHEREAS, in 2020 and 2021, the Digital Marin project conducted community outreach to sectors including business and economic development, education, government and emergency management, health and community based organizations, internet, communication and technology providers, planning, transportation, public works, and utilities, and residents; and

WHEREAS, the individual findings for each sector were analyzed and combined into a Needs Assessment Report that identified seven overall needs that represent challenges that must be overcome to achieve Digital Marin's vision; and

WHEREAS, successful implementation of the Digital Marin Strategic Plan requires support from all communities in Marin County.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Town Council hereby supports the Digital Marin Strategic Plan.

The foregoing resolution was adopted at a duly noticed regular meeting of the Town Council of the Town of Fairfax, held in said Tow on the 6th day of April 2022, but the following vote:

AYES:
NOES:
ABSENT:

Stephanie Hellman, Mayor

Attest: _____
Michele Gardner, Town Clerk



Town of San Anselmo

525 San Anselmo Avenue
San Anselmo, CA 94960

Staff Report

TO: Town Council

2/22/2022

Item #: 2.2.

FROM:

Elise Semonian, Planning Director

SUBJECT:

Resolution in Support of Digital Marin Strategic Plan

RECOMMENDATION

That the Town Council adopt a Resolution in Support of Digital Marin Strategic Plan, Attachment 1

BACKGROUND

See February 1, 2022, staff report to Marin County Board of Supervisors, Attachment 2, and Digital Marin Strategic Plan, Attachment 3.

DISCUSSION

Staff is recommending that the Town Council support the digital infrastructure strategic plan recently adopted by the County of Marin Board of Supervisors, called "Digital Marin." Digital Marin was a collaborative effort involving residents, business, education, government, healthcare, non-profits, utilities, and technology providers. As provided in the plan, "From the outset, the project envisioned a future where everyone in Marin has access to universally available, affordable, reliable, resilient, and safe broadband with robust devices, technical support, and the digital literacy needed to take part in an ever increasing digital world. This vision also included serving residents, businesses, and other organizations better through public and private collaborations and sharing of data and resources."

The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted many issues facing students, households in underserved areas, older adults and people with disabilities, and other individuals facing barriers to using the internet. The Digital Marin project involved a needs assessment to define where Marin is experiencing the digital divide, which includes certain areas of the County outside of San Anselmo as well as many older adults and persons with disabilities. The plan includes several strategies to move Marin to a better digital future by creating leadership, governance, collaboration, and actions that advance broadband deployment and digital adoption.

Planning Director Elise Semonian and San Anselmo resident Bruce Vogen served on the Executive Steering Committee for the project. There was extensive public outreach including work groups and surveys that resulted in feedback from over 3,000 Marin residents, business owners, community advocates, and employees from government, education, and other industries.

Digital Marin did receive concerns from residents regarding wireless technology and the plan includes

consideration of “all options including underground and aerial fiber, fixed wireless, wave broadband, satellite, and other available and emerging technologies” to assist with deployment of universally accessible public and public/private broadband service.

The Town’s support of the strategic plan will help Marin County advocate for implementation of the program and position the County to obtain funding for actions in the plan. The Town would not be bound to any specific actions.

FISCAL IMPACT

There is no fiscal impact associated with adopting the resolution.

GENERAL PLAN CONSISTENCY

The Town General Plan Conservation Element was drafted in 1975 and revised in 1984 and does not address the internet or access to digital technology.

CEQA AND CLIMATE ACTION PLAN CONSISTENCY

The support of the joint platform would not be considered a project subject to review under the California Environmental Policy Act. Access to broadband supports working from home and other actions that reduce single occupant automobile use.

CONCLUSION

Adopt resolution supporting Digital Marin Strategic Plan.