



City Council
Digital Equity Meeting
Summary

36 Court Street
Springfield, MA 01103
<http://www.springfieldcityhall.com>

Jose Delgado (Chair)

October 22, 2025

12:00 PM

City Hall - Room 200

Call To Order

12:00 PM Meeting called to order on October 22, 2025, in Hybrid Room 200, 36 Court Street, Springfield, MA 01103.

Roll Call

In person: Councilor Delgado (Chair), Charles Knight, Eileen Leahy (Comcast), Sacoy Malone, Brad Pallazo (Comcast).

Zoom: Roberta Kilkenny, Jean Canosa Albano, Councilor Davila, Stephen Howard, Councilor Santaniello.

Public Portion

Meeting Summary – Digital Equity Working Group

Quick Recap

The working group reviewed current grant opportunities and funding programs to support digital equity initiatives in Springfield, including digital device distribution and expanded data access. Comcast representatives joined to explore partnership opportunities and address concerns related to service access, infrastructure limitations, affordability, and connectivity issues—particularly in older homes and multi-unit buildings. The conversation also covered technical aspects of broadband service tiers, marketing strategies, and how different providers share infrastructure.

Next Steps

Office Team

- Scan Comcast handouts and email them to all working group participants.
- Share finalized digital equity report with Comcast.
- Connect Comcast with neighborhood councils to explore partnerships.
- Check with the school department on existing device programs.
- Track specific addresses reporting internet issues and share with Comcast.

- Coordinate with Comcast to schedule community education sessions.

Sacoy

- Submit the priority application for the Connected Online Grant Program by next Friday.
- Review the information session recording for the Connected Online Grant.
- Review past grant materials to support the new application.
- Research local organizations engaged in digital equity work to identify partners.

Brad (Comcast)

- Provide detailed guidance on what various internet speed tiers support (use-case examples).
- Confirm whether Internet Essentials customers with debt under one year receive debt forgiveness.
- Research how accessory dwelling units are treated for service eligibility.
- Share contact information with Councilor Delgado for distribution.

Eileen (Comcast)

- Coordinate with Brad on potential cyber-savvy luncheons and digital literacy sessions with neighborhood councils and the Council on Aging.

1. Discussion On Grant Opportunities

Digital Equity Grant Opportunities

The group discussed two significant funding opportunities:

- **MBI Digital Equity Implementation Grant** (anticipate positive updates pending)
- **Connected Online Grant Program**, offering support for devices and data services, with a priority application deadline next Friday.
Sacoy outlined eligibility and noted that device costs are covered, but the focus should be on ensuring residents have data access. The group agreed to proceed with the priority application and consider leveraging the MBI implementation grant for hotspot distribution.

Digital Devices Grant Collaboration

The team discussed applying for a digital devices and data plan grant. Alternative distribution channels, such as community centers and schools, were suggested. The city already has a strong foundation from prior federal grant work. Comcast's Brad Palazzo highlighted several potential regional partners and stressed the importance of cross-organization collaboration to narrow the digital divide.

2. Comcast's Network Infrastructure & Service Offerings

Digital Equity Partnerships in Springfield

Comcast expressed openness to building relationships with neighborhood councils, despite not currently having established connections. Councilor Davila raised concerns about historical gaps in engagement. The discussion also covered citywide access, affordability challenges, and the need for improved communication with residents about available programs.

Comcast Service Access Challenges

Participants raised concerns about inconsistent service availability in multi-story buildings—where lower floors may be connected, but upper floors are not. The group will track affected locations and explore retrofit funding opportunities such as MBI grants. Comcast also provided updates on ongoing network upgrades to enable multi-gig speeds and reviewed its low-income offerings, such as Internet Essentials.

Comcast Internet Service Overview

The group reviewed Comcast's service tiers, including Internet Essentials and Now, and discussed which speed levels are suitable for typical households. There was consensus that more explicit public guidance is needed. The team also reviewed program eligibility, historical changes to discounted programs, and Comcast's participation in MBI and NTIA efforts.

3. The Internet Essentials Program & Its Impact (Comcast)

Broadband Services & Infrastructure

Questions were raised about service eligibility for residents with past-due accounts and the use of shared conduits by multiple broadband providers. Comcast's team confirmed that debts under one year may be forgiven under the Internet Essentials program and committed to follow up on conduit usage details.

4. Our Current & Potential Community Partnerships (Comcast)

City Broadband Service Operations

City staff outlined how local infrastructure—including conduits and poles—is utilized by Comcast and other ISPs. The conversation touched on resident outreach, the need for better education around internet speeds, and the importance of collecting precise addresses to diagnose service issues.

5. Ongoing Efforts & Opportunities Related To Digital Equity (Comcast)

Aging Infrastructure & Multi-Unit Buildings

The group discussed wiring challenges in older homes and multi-unit buildings. Comcast noted that providers can share building wiring, though each requires its own equipment. The discussion also addressed outreach to seniors and outstanding questions regarding accessory dwelling units, which Comcast will investigate.

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