



**Date of Council Meeting: July 27, 2015**

**TOWN OF LEESBURG  
TOWN COUNCIL WORK SESSION**

**Subject:** Transparency Initiative

**Staff Contacts:** John Callahan, Interim IT Manager  
Clark G. Case, Director of Finance and Administrative Services

**Council Action Requested:** Work session discussion only at this time.

**Staff Recommendation:** Staff supports carefully implemented transparency initiatives that address the security of information and the limitation of staff resources.

Staff also recommends using the proposed policy document as a long-term general policy guide that continues the transparency initiatives already under way with OpenGov in the approved Fiscal Year 2016 budget.

**Commission Recommendation:** The Technology and Communications Commission has endorsed and recommended a transparency initiative per the attached document.

**Fiscal Impact:** An in-depth fiscal impact study has not been directed or conducted at this time. A preliminary review of the proposed transparency initiative by staff indicates that additional resources may be needed such as staffing, software, and data storage in order to avoid negatively impacting existing core functions and/or work requirements. No funding is available to cover such costs in the approved Fiscal Year 2016 budget.

**Work Plan Impact:** An in-depth work plan impact has not been directed or conducted at this time.

**Executive Summary:** On April 7, 2015, the Technology and Communications Commission (TCC) approved a transparency initiative for the Town of Leesburg. The recommendation was to make all Town information and records available over the internet in an electronically searchable form by October 2019 that are not otherwise specifically exempted from public disclosure by Virginia public records statutes.

In addition, the TCC has requested authority to oversee the Town's efforts to achieve this goal.

**Background:**

The Technology and Communications Commission (TCC) has been discussing the importance of government transparency over an extended period. It has reviewed the

OpenGov information, web payments portal, and web content upgrades already performed by the Town. While the TCC likes what the Town has done so far, it does not believe the Town's efforts go far enough in achieving transparency in the Town's operations. The TCC has received a presentation from the Sunlight Foundation which is a nonprofit, advocacy organization that promotes and does consulting on transparency in all levels of government.

The TCC's recommendation proposes that the Town make available, over the internet, and in searchable and downloadable form, 100% of its information and databases that are not required to be kept confidential by Virginia public records law. It believes that having this level of transparency will make the Town a more desirable place for businesses and educational institutions to locate, and will thus help create additional employment opportunities.

The recommendation requires this goal be achieved by October 2019. The recommendation also requires a list of all sources of Town data be published by August 1, 2015 to include data type, volume of data, data format, and indicate whether the data is or is not already published to the public. The recommendation requires all detail budget reports be placed on the Town website immediately. In addition, the TCC is requesting authority to oversee the Town's transparency program.

07 April 2015

## The Town of Leesburg Virginia Technology and Communication Commission Proposal for Data Transparency Program and Open Data Portal

The Town of Leesburg Virginia is geographically located in an area that is committed to the advancement of technology and crucial to the foundation of our nation's governing organizations. As such, The Town should be committed to the following goals which will be of benefit to all residents:

- Using technology to foster open, transparent, and accessible government
- Increasing public trust and participation by engaging Town residents in how the Town operates, providing opportunities for economic development
- Enhancing Town Council decision making by allowing staff, residents, and other organizations to spot trends in all legally accessible data
- Exposing inefficiencies by allowing staff, residents, and other organizations to review all legally accessible data
- Foster an environment of innovation to attract new businesses and educational institutions interested in using open data to provide better services and facilitate research

As such, after due consideration the Town of Leesburg Virginia Technology and Communication Commission (TCC) recommends the Leesburg Town Council implement a robust and open Data Transparency Program, the goal of which is to publish Town data via an Open Data Portal. The Commission urges each Council member to carefully review the 'Smart Cities Open Data Guide' published by the Smart Cities Council, in particular the eight principles for open government data:

- Complete: All public data is made available
- Primary: Data is as collected at the source, not in aggregate or modified terms
- Timely: Data is made available as soon as possible to preserve its value
- Accessible: Data is available to the widest range of users for use in the widest purposes
- Open Format: Data is presented in a widely accepted, nonproprietary, searchable, platform-independent, machine-readable method for formatting data
- Non-discriminatory: Data is available to everyone
- License-free: Data is open, except for areas of reasonable privacy and security

The Commission feels confident the guide provides all of the necessary background and policy implications that should be considered by the Town. Additional information and support can be found at the Sunlight Foundation: <http://sunlightfoundation.com/>

As such, the Commission presents the following recommendations:

- We recommend the Town of Leesburg publish data with in accordance with the principles outlined above and to the extent not prohibited by Virginia public record laws.
- We recommend the town council add providing continued policy guidance of the Data Transparency Program to the list of duties of the TCC.

- We recommend that the ordinance or resolution adopted to implement this plan include requirements to continuously improve the source data.
- We recommend that all new technology deployments include data transparency as a critical requirement.
- We recommend that council begins to consider and delineate how each program, policy, or activity be measured for success and that these measurements be added to the transparency program data as they are implemented.
- The town manager assign a coordinator for this initiative.

Specifically, the TCC asks that:

1. Staff immediately publish the detailed budget support reports from the Town's budget packet to the "Budget" website.
2. Council adopts a policy for data transparency by August 1, 2015. Include as part of the policy
  - a. The eight principles of open government in the Smart Cities Open Data Guide
  - b. A data obfuscation and redaction plan.
3. A list of all sources of Town Data is published by August 1, 2015. Include data type, volume of data, data format, and indicate whether the data is or is not already published to the public. This list will be used by the Technology Commission to prioritize data publication recommendations. Establish a process by which new data sources are identified and included in the published list.
4. Measure the percentage of town data that is published to the open data portal with the goal that 100% will be available by October of 2019. This metric should be published monthly to TCC and Council to monitor the progress of the program.