

VILLAGE OF HOMEWOOD



BOARD AGENDA MEMORANDUM

DATE OF MEETING: July 8, 2025

To: Village President and Board of Trustees

Through: Napoleon Haney, Village Manager

From: Terence Acquah, Assistant Village Manager

Topic: Budget Amendment and Contract with Urbancom.net for High Speed Internet

PURPOSE

Staff is requesting the Village Board authorize the Village President to enter into a contract with Urbancom.net of Oak Forest, IL to serve as the Village's new internet network provider for ultra-high-speed internet and network redundancy throughout the Village, in the amount of \$214,800 over 60 months. A budget amendment is required to accommodate the new high-speed internet service.

PROCESS

Background

Managed and operated by Urbancom.net, in cooperation with the South Suburban Mayors and Managers Association and Cook County, the Chicago-Southland Fiber Network (CSFN) provides a high-speed Gigabit Fiber Optic Network serving the south suburbs of Chicago. The network, initially constructed in 2014 with State of Illinois "Illinois Jobs Now" funds, is a state-of-the-art carrier ethernet fiber optic network. The network links the south suburbs to the main internet exchange points in Illinois at 350 E. Cermak Rd, Chicago, IL and peering locations in Oak Brook, IL. The network provides ultra-high speed and redundant capacity from the main internet exchange points to the Urbancom.net network operations and co-location facility in Oak Forest, IL.

In an effort to combat the digital divide in the Cook County's south suburbs, Cook County is currently sponsoring an ongoing extensive expansion of the network. Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle has tasked offices under the President to advance digital equity in the County and has embarked on an expansion of the CSFN to an additional 17 new communities in the south suburbs and in existing communities served by CSFN fiber. When complete, the network will provide fiber optic infrastructure to over 30 communities including the City of Markham, Village of Monee, Village of Olympia Fields, Village of Tinley Park, Village of Frankfort, Village of Dixmoor, Village of Calumet Park, and countless other government agencies and businesses. This expansion will connect municipal, police, fire, libraries, schools, community anchor institutions, and local businesses to high-speed fiber optic providers.

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Eventually, consumers will be able to connect via private LTE, Wi-Fi or fiber to the home. Network access capacity will allow each customer up to 10 Gbps on a redundant 100Gbps backbone connections with a 99.999% uptime which is extremely fast — fast enough to download full movies in seconds or support heavy use by businesses, schools, and local governments.

This fiber technology allows the region to be at the forefront by providing a high-speed telecommunications infrastructure for green manufacturing, cargo-oriented development, and logistics. The economic benefit of high speed fiber connections will allow municipalities to attract new and vibrant businesses to the region and provide access to high-paying jobs for residents. This network allows our communities and businesses to successfully compete in the global economy. The construction project itself will provide high-paying jobs to Cook County workers employed by local MBE and WMBE certified contractors.

Proposal

In spring 2022, Village staff reached out to Urbancom.net regarding their internet service expansion into the Homewood area. Urbancom.net is a locally owned, privately held corporation providing broadband internet and boutique technology services to Chicago's southern, southwestern, and western suburbs since 1997 and has joined the Cook County-backed Chicago Southland Fiber Network to provide low-cost, high-speed fiber to municipalities and local businesses alike. Upon seeing the prices, the Village of Homewood insisted on expediting the expansion to their facilities.

Comcast currently provides internet (100 Mbps), phone, and TV services to several Village buildings. The internet is delivered to Village Hall via fiber and shared with the Police and Fire Departments through a Village-owned fiber line, and with Public Works via a Comcast Ethernet Private Line (EPL). The Police Department also has a separate connection for State and County services. These existing internet connections, including the link to Public Works, will be replaced by the new UrbanCom fiber network.

The Village currently pays Comcast about \$2,000 per month for the services that Urbancom.net will be supplanting. Previously, the Village had received pricing from Comcast for a similar proposal, but for only three locations and 300mbps, which is a third of the speed proposed from Urbancom.net. This limited proposal would cost \$2,500-\$2,700 per month in addition to the amount that the Village currently pays, for a total of \$4,500-\$4,700 per month.

Urbancom.net is proposing to provide ultra-fast internet service, one gigabit per second for both downloading and uploading, to the Fire Department, Police Department, Village Hall, and Public Works. In addition to internet access, they will also set up high-speed connections between all the buildings so they can share data directly and keep things running smoothly even if one connection goes down. This setup helps ensure backup routes and keeps services connected at

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all times. The length of the term is 60 months and the price is \$3,580 per month; \$214,800 total over the entirety of the term.

At the November 12, 2024 Board meeting, the Village Board approved the purchase and installation of a FortiGate Network Firewall from Urban Communications of Oak Forest, IL, the lowest responsible bidder, for a total cost of \$50,534.21. The investment replaced the Village's existing network firewalls, which had been in operation since 2010, and prepared the Village's network for the Cook County fiber internet connection.

To ensure a seamless transition, the Village may need to maintain both Comcast and Urbancom.net services concurrently for a short period—approximately one to two months—if the Board approves moving forward with Urbancom.net. This temporary overlap will help avoid any service disruptions during the changeover. It's also worth noting that Comcast will continue to provide certain services, such as cable and internet at the Brian Carey Training Center, since the Chicago Southland Fiber Network does not currently reach that facility.

Finances

A budget amendment of \$22,000 is needed to cover the cost of UrbanCom.net services for the remainder of fiscal year 2025-2026 and to cover a potential few months of overlap with Comcast to ensure there are no service disruptions during the changeover. In the future, \$42,960 will be budgeted in the Information Technology budget to cover the cost of Urbancom.net services.

OUTCOME

Contracting with UrbanCom offers the Village a number of significant benefits that improve both the reliability and performance of its network infrastructure. As a County-backed internet service provider headquartered locally in Oak Forest, UrbanCom.net can respond to issues much more quickly than national providers, often within minutes rather than hours. The new setup eliminates single points of failure by creating multiple interconnected connection points that can reroute traffic if one path goes down, significantly increasing network reliability and reducing bottlenecks.

Each major Village facility will receive its own dedicated full-duplex gigabit connection, delivering internet speeds that are ten times faster than the current service and scalable to meet future needs. While the new system is more costly than the current Comcast arrangement, it is still thousands of dollars less than quotes from other providers for similar services. Additionally, UrbanCom will install and support new firewalls as part of the service, offering a streamlined, one-stop solution for all connectivity needs and building a knowledge base that enhances long-term service and support.

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FINANCIAL IMPACT

- **Funding Source:** General Fund
- **Budgeted Amount:** \$24,000
- **Budget Amendment Amount:** \$22,000
- **Future Budgeted Amount:** \$42,960

LEGAL REVIEW

Completed

RECOMMENDED BOARD ACTION

Waive competitive bidding in order to secure access to high-speed internet service that meets operational and infrastructure needs; approve a budget amendment of \$22,000, and, authorize the Village President to enter into a contract with the UrbanComm.net of Oak Forest, IL in the amount of \$214,800 for a period of 60 months.

ATTACHMENT(S)

- Agreement and addendum
- CSFN Presentation