KC Digital Drive

Civic Tech Forum Questionnaire

Responses by Katheryn Shields, 4th District At-Large

Digital Divide

What is the city's role in bridging the digital divide?

The city needs to work digital providers to insure that access is expanded to all residents, and not just to those who can afford it.

What goals should City set in bridging the digital divide?

The city should set a goal of increasing access within vulnerable populations to 10% increases each year.

What strategies should be adopted to achieve those goals?

The city should partner with Google to institute a program similar to the one that Google is pursuing in Austin, Texas. That program is focused on helping residents of public housing gain access, including waiver of the $300 construction fee. We may also want to pursue a shared access solution where high speed connections are shared rather than based on individual participation. This would require a change in Google's policy and may require some type of subsidy from the city.

Open Data

Have you ever used the City's open data portal?

Yes, I have used it to review "311 complaints". I have also used it to review budget issues.

Do you support an ongoing commitment to open access to city data?

Yes, I do. In fact I believe more should be online. For example when I was Jackson County Executive, we developed our website so residents could not only pay their property taxes online, but could also at any time use the site to access their payment records and to print off a paid receipt. This was very helpful for residents because those receipts are needed for licensing a car in Missouri.

Residents and businesses in KCMO often need to be able to document that their earning taxes are paid or some license fee is paid. But online access to those records and the ability to print a paid receipt is not currently available, which causes great inconvenience to our residents and businesses.

What are the biggest opportunities that a philosophy of open data offers?

The opportunities are endless. Residents have easy access to vital information which should include their own records with respect to payment/nonpayment of required taxes and fees. Data can be used to develop strategic responses to problems in specific geographic areas. Students and researchers need access to data to further their studies or research projects.

What are some of the risks?

One of the major risks involves the publication of private information that might be used to harm an individual or business. For example, while I was Jackson County Executive, we put all of the land deeds online so that they can be searched from remote locations. Prior to this change, land records could only be searched at the county records department. This was a great improvement. However, some mortgage companies included social security numbers on the deeds that they filed thus opening up individuals to identify theft and a myriad of financial problems.

What approaches do you support to manage those opportunities and risks?

For many of the problems, individual solutions will need to be developed. For instance in the example set out above, Jackson County—by state law—was prohibited from redacting any material from a land deed. To correct this problem caused by the mortgage companies, we sought and obtained state legislation which allowed us to black out such personal information from deeds.

As far as managing opportunities, I believe educating the public that this vast source of information is available is needed to maximize its use.

<u>**Economic Development**</u>

How do you think the City's economic development toolkit needs to change in order to compete in the current economic environment?

The city needs to continue to adapt by making technological advances as important a factor in its economic development tool kit as any other factor. This means bringing in experts in these fields to educate the Council on techonology role in economic development. The city should also work with private business and educational institutions to update and expand educational opportunities so that our local workforce is prepared to make a positive contribution in the new work environment.

Smart City

How proactive do you think the City should be in developing these sorts of solutions?

I believe we need to be innovative and proactive in developing these smart technology solutions. We should pursue any technology that is beneficial. However we need to make sure that the technology will actually benefit the "common good." For example, some studies have shown that red light cameras can actually increase the number of accidents at intersections. Also the manner in which red light cameras were implemented in Kansas City was illegal under Missouri state law. Because of this oversight the cameras were discontinued and the city suffered an embarrassing law suit. So while I believe that we need to be innovative and proactive that doesn't mean we should act so hastily that we do not investigate the legal and practical consequences of our decisions.

How would you balance the priority of the City to support the common good with the preferences of the individuals who may not want to participate or worry about their privacy?

This is a balance that will have to be struck when considering many technological innovations. The solution is to listen to the experts on both sides and also the citizens of Kansas City. You have seen the importance and value of public input through the recent debate with the FCC and net neutrality. Through committee hearings and public gatherings I would use the information I receive to make the best decision for the city. Privacy is very important and these issues will have to be weighed carefully. But we cannot ignore the potential benefit that technology can have.

Sharing economy/collaborative economy

How should the City treat/deal with these emerging business models in a way that is friendly to innovation and also respects the need to protect the public and fund city services? Which collaborative economic activities do you participate in?

This issue is about a balance between innovation and public safety. We need to promote innovation to lure jobs and economic development to our area. Part of this is to ensure that the laws we have do not strangle innovation. However, regulation has its place especially when its purpose is to protect public health and safety. To use the car service Uber as an example, there have been multiple media reports of safety concerns in various cities. There are also organizations which believe that the lack of regulation on Uber exacerbates the public safety concerns. I am not an expert in this area, and I cannot think of a specific collaborative activity that I use, but I will work with knowledgeable people to develop and implement a plan that both promotes innovation and protects the citizens of Kansas City.

The Playbook

Have you had a chance to review the playbook? Where do you think we've seen the most progress? Where do you see the greatest opportunities?

I have reviewed the playbook, and I think the most progress has been made in recognizing the opportunity that has been provided to our region because of the installation of high speed internet in KCMO and KCKS. The creation of MBIT and its work with citizens to develop the plan is exciting. And it has identified MARC as the central organizing point. To be at this point is a great achievement. One we must build upon. As a city Council person I would be committed to listening to the experts and supporting and funding the implementation of the Playbook. The opportunities lie in so many directions. The challenge will be to move forward on so many fronts.

Personal Tech Adoption

How do you decide when to absorb new technology tools into your life and work? What social media channels are you most active on? What are your favorite tech tools that you recently started to use?

I decide when to absorb new technology into my work when the smart people I have brought around me advise me to do so. Again, I am not an expert in technology, I am completely open to the adoption of new technology in my work. When I became Jackson County Executive, the county had a 20 year old IBM mainframe and lots of dumb terminals. Nothing within the county was interconnected. Every department and employee was in its own non-technology silo. Contact between employees was made by phone, fax, or face to face. Citizens who wished to interact with the county could call, visit in person, or use the mail.

While I did not know the answers to this problem, I used staff and consultants to build an intra-county connected system so that information could flow electronically from department to department. These were integrated systems that talked to each other so that data was entered only once, not multiple times as is still happening in certain situations in KCMO government.   These innovative changes saved county government far more money than they cost, although their implementation had to be budgeted over multiple years.

We also created a user-friendly website that allows citizens to pay taxes online, print multiple paid receipts at any time after payment, search all county property deeds online (this has been a major boon to the real estate community), reserve a tee time at the golf course or a shelter house at the parks. County government, under my direction, became available online for the public.

Personally I use less current technology than many, but it still has an impact on my life. I have a smart phone on which I keep my calendar and my email. It's also a quick search tool for me when I need to access the internet. I connect with my son and family members on Facebook. I also use either my smart phone or my Garmin to locate addresses, and health care web portals to access my medical information. I recognize that even with someone like me, who uses technology less than many others, these advances still have an important role in my life. Technology's benefits cannot be ignored whether on the personal or city wide level.