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## **MEMORANDUM**

To: Dr. Martha Ryan-Toye and District 96 Board of Education

From: Don Tufano - Director of Technology and Innovation

Date: April, 2025

RE: Information Regarding Proposed Wireless Network Replacement Project

### **Executive Summary**

The wireless network replacement project is currently planned for summer of 2025. This project is partially subsidized by the Federal E-Rate Program program and was originally presented and discussed in August, 2023 as part of the FY24 Technology Roadmap presentation and the Committee of the Whole meeting. The implementation of the project replaces equipment originally installed 8 years ago in 2017. The project focuses on modernizing and enhancing District 96's wireless infrastructure, while ensuring continuity with the district's existing network infrastructure.

### **Project Scope and Proposal Review:**

The proposed initiative involves replacing the district's existing Meraki wireless access points with 154 state-of-the-art Cisco Meraki MR46 (WiFi 6) access points. This updated solution encompasses hardware, software, implementation services, and 5-years of comprehensive product maintenance and support. All components adhere to the Federal E-Rate Program Guidelines and all proposals were vetted in accordance with the Federal program's review and approval process.

There were a total of four responses to the Request for Proposal that was posted to the Universal Services Administration Company (USAC) portal. The E-Rate program is administered by the Universal Service Administrative Company under the direction of the FCC. Specifically, USAC is responsible for processing the applications for support, confirming eligibility, and reimbursing service providers and eligible schools and libraries for the discounted services.

Of the four proposals, two of the responses were for Cisco Meraki wireless networks, one for Aruba Networks and one for Ruckus. The proposal totals for each were as follows:

- Cisco Meraki (Mindsight - Downers Grove, IL): \$ 178,780
- Cisco Meraki (Optimus Technology Company - Orlando, FL) \$ 218,077
- Aruba Networks (Urban Communications - Oak Forest, IL) \$ 168,014
- Ruckus Networks (Urban Communications - Oak Forest, IL) \$ 132,621

Proposals were evaluated and scored based on four specific criteria: price, understanding of the District's needs, prior experience, and continuity/interoperability with our existing network infrastructure.

The project details were reviewed with the Finance Committee in March and the full scope, and timeline have been reviewed in detail with incoming Director of Technology, Molly Marquardt. This proposed project comes with the full understanding and support of both the Finance Committee and the incoming director.

### **Key Project Details:**

- **Technology Update:** The district is seeking to transition to the latest WiFi 6 technology with Meraki MR46 access points, ensuring improved performance, capacity, and efficiency.
- **Cloud Management:** The environment maintains the district's established cloud-based management approach, seamlessly integrating with existing Cisco Meraki Security Appliance, Core Switches and Mobile Device Management platforms.
- **E-Rate Funding:** District 96 is leveraging the Federal E-Rate Program for the purchase. The district will receive a 40% rebate on the total purchase of \$178,780, in the form of a post-implementation rebate. This subsidy significantly reduces the district's financial investment to approximately \$107,000.
- **Implementation:** The project covers the purchase and configuration of 154 Meraki MR46 access points across the district's five schools.

- **Modernization:** This replacement aligns with the standard 5-7 year technology replacement cycle, ensuring District 96 benefits from the latest advancements in wireless technology.
- **Enhanced Capabilities:** The upgrade will maximize device capabilities, network and internet throughput, and expand wireless capacity, coverage, and density throughout all facilities.

We will be seeking Board of Education approval of the Cisco Meraki MR46 (WiFi 6) wireless network replacement proposal, utilizing longtime Cisco Meraki partner, Downers Grove based Mingsight, at the upcoming Business Meeting on April 16th . This initiative, supported by E-Rate funding, will significantly enhance the district's wireless infrastructure, ensuring a robust and reliable network for students and staff for years to come.