



Cities Have New Options for Internet Domain Names

by Marc Shapiro

Cities now have two new options, and may need to take special precautions, when it comes to selecting an Internet address for their official home page, as a result of pending regulations for the "dot-gov" (.gov) and changes to the "dot-us" (.us) domain.

The .gov domain, which had previously been limited to the federal government, will be open to state and local governments pending final regulations proposed earlier this year by the Office of Governmentwide Policy. Having a .gov domain name will enable cities to provide greater assurances to citizens and the public that they are accessing an official government site.

Although the .gov domain names for state and local governments will not be released until later this year, cities and towns can reserve their .gov domain name now at the General Service Administration (GSA) Domain Registration Page: <http://www.nic.gov/index.html>. The GSA site provides detailed information on eligibility requirements and the registration process. Currently, there is no charge to register for a .gov domain. However, it is expected that there will be a charge for the .gov domain in 2003.

Changes in the .us domain came about this year as a result of the federal government's decision to release the .us domain for wider use, essentially making it a "top level" domain like dot-com or dot-org. It was previously restricted to government and public service entities, but will be open to the public next year.

The .us domain is now managed by NeuStar, a Washington, D.C.-based technology firm that has taken measures to ensure that cities have the opportunity to protect their possible .us domain names.

There is good news for cities with "legacy" .us domain names. Legacy domain names — generally configured as ci.cityname.state.us — will not be turned over

to the public, according to NeuStar. If a city does not have a "delegated manager," an Internet address registrar, for a legacy domain, NeuStar will create a legacy domain name for the city at no charge.

Although cities are able to keep their legacy .us names, they still need to assess whether they wish to reserve or register a "second-level" domain name. A second-level domain name is that part of an Internet address that appears immediately to the left of the top-level domain, such as "nlc" in www.nlc.org. A second level-domain name for a city Internet site might look like this: www.cityofchicago.us.

"A naming convention like ci.cityname.state.us doesn't necessarily resonate with the mass market or the majority of U.S. citizens," Mike Kennedy, director of business development for NeuStar, said. "However, www.cityofchicago.us does. We are maintaining the legacy space because it is widely used, but we're making these other names

available as optional names to state and local governments if they choose to use them."

NeuStar is currently holding back some 50,000 or more web addresses with the .us domain. These addresses, such as the Chicago example, have been reserved for local governments until January 30, 2003. After that date, these addresses become available for anyone to register. An alphabetized list of the city names that have been reserved (organized by state) can be viewed at www.neustar.us/reserved/state/.

When these "second-level" .us domain names become open to any U.S. citizen or company, a city could find its name pointing to an Internet site that has no affiliation with local government.

Cities and towns have three options when it comes to these second-level .us domain names — do nothing with the names when they become available next year and risk having that name used by anyone in the public; reserve the domain name permanently

even if they choose not to use it, which makes it impossible for any other company or individual to use that name; or pay to get that domain name registered, either on a periodic or lifetime basis.

NeuStar has set up several pricing options for registering a state or local government .us domain name: a lifetime registration is \$395; a five-year registration, \$180; a three-year registration, \$168; and for \$152, a state or local government can permanently reserve its domain name.

If a city is using or planning on using a domain other than .us (i.e. .gov, .org, .com, or .net) and does not want to move to the .us domain, NLC recommends reserving the appropriate .us name(s) anyway through NeuStar to protect the name from being released.

More information on the .us domain options is available at www.neustar.us/reserved/ or contact Marc Shapiro at NLC, at 202.626.3019 or by e-mail: shapiro@nlc.org. ■



City of Cambridge

O-8.

IN CITY COUNCIL

January 6, 2003

VICE MAYOR DAVIS
COUNCILLOR DECKER
COUNCILLOR GALLUCCIO
COUNCILLOR MAHER
COUNCILLOR MURPHY
COUNCILLOR SIMMONS
MAYOR SULLIVAN
COUNCILLOR TOOMEY

WHEREAS: It is an expressed goal of this City Council to improve and simplify public access to city services and provide more and better opportunities for the public to participate in governing; now therefore be it

ORDERED: That the City Manager be and hereby is requested to report back to the City Council on shortening the current Internet address for Cambridge by acquiring the "dot-gov" (.gov) and/or "dot-us" (.us) Internet domain name(s) for the City of Cambridge. (Attachment)

In City Council January 6, 2003.

Adopted by the affirmative vote of eight members.

Attest:- D. Margaret Drury, City Clerk.

A true copy;

ATTEST:-

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "D. Margaret Drury".

D. Margaret Drury
City Clerk

CM-5

ORDER #8

Request the City Manager to report back to the City Council on acquiring the "dot-gov" (.gov) and or "dot-us" (.us) Internet domain name (s) for the City of Cambridge.

Vice Mayor Davis

In City Council January 6, 2003

ORDER ADOPTED.