



COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

BROADBAND COMMITTEE

JULY 25, 2022

Christine Husom	District 1
Darek Vetsch	District 2
Mark Daleiden	District 3
Mary Wetter	District 4
Michael Kaczmarek	District 5

DATE APPROVED: AUGUST 2, 2022

Members Present: Darek Vetsch, Mark Daleiden, Clay Wilfahrt, Mark Kellogg, Elizabeth Karels, Zach Breyen, Matthew Fomby

Others Present: (Remote): Virgil Hawkins, Schawn Johnson, Lindsey Meyer, John Holler, Christine Husom, Heather Lemieux

I. Request For Information (RFI) Responses and Recommendations

a. Wireless

Project Administrator Elizabeth Karels recapped the 10 county grants approved, totaling \$1.7 million. She said the county had received one response from the RFI for fixed wireless. The company's proposal showed the cost to install towers for wireless was more than the cost to install fiber. The company said it may be able to find alternative funding to help alleviate the cost of the towers.

b. Fiber

Karels said there were three RFI responses for installing fiber. Karels recommended to pause the evaluation until after Border-to-Border Broadband Development Grants were awarded. Commissioner Mark Daleiden asked if the companies that had submitted responses had asked for letters of support or matching grants. Karels said they had received requests and part of the committee meeting would be to determine if the county wanted to contribute matching funds using American Rescue Plan (ARP) funds.

County Commissioner Darek Vetsch said the decision to pause until after the Border-to-Border Broadband Development Grants were awarded was an easy one to make due to the cost difference and his concern that wireless gave residents only limited access and inconsistent speed. Karels said the wireless company claimed it could provide consistent speed and coverage. Vetsch said wireless would only work if there were limited hinderances.

RECOMMENDATION: To pause evaluation until after Border-to-Border Broadband Development Grants are awarded.

II. City of Buffalo Grant Application

Karels said the broadband grant for Buffalo had been put on hold until there could be a conversation with the Highway Department regarding updates planned for Braddock Avenue. She asked Business Analyst Zach Breyen to update the committee on what had been done since the last meeting. Breyen said the grant to Buffalo was ready to be awarded since highway had confirmed its schedule to update Braddock Avenue. He said the concern that put the awarding of the Buffalo grant on hold was that the Highway Department would do work down Braddock without the fiber being put in. He said that the planned update of Braddock Avenue now included the addition of laying fiber. Karels said the price tag on this project had not changed. Breyen said that houses on the north side of Constance Lake would not receive service initially but would be part of future planned updates. Karels said this would be brought to The Wright County Board of

Commissioners for approval.

RECOMMENDATIONS: Approve the grant for Buffalo to Buffalo Fiber.

III. Border to Border Grant Updates

Karels said the last item on the agenda was the Border-to-Border Broadband Development Grant recommendations. Karels said that applications were due Thursday, August 4. She said the recommendation to the board would be to provide letters of support and/or a pledge of financial support as requested. Karels said a local match of 2 percent to 3 percent of the project or \$150-\$200 per passing with a cap per project was recommended. Karels gave the examples of TDS Telecom project #1 and Charter Communications Project A showing how the match would work dollar wise.

Daleiden and Vetsch expressed interest in seeing how the TDS Telecom project was progressing. Karels said one of the TDS projects was approximately 1,500 addresses. Assistant Information Technology (IT) Director Mark Kellogg said he would like to see an emergency redundant fiber loop to the Sheriff's Office Training Center. Vetsch and Daleiden expressed concern and questioned why the area around Maple Lake did not have any interest from broadband companies yet. Karels said the broadband team would look into the RFIs to see if any company had addressed Maple Lake. Daleiden asked when the grants would be awarded. Breyen said sometime in the fall of 2022. Breyen said the biggest expense in the fiber project were the handholes going to each property.

IT Director Matthew Fomby asked how much money had been committed. Karels said \$1.7 million in ARP funds had been allocated. Vetsch said if any money was not used it could be reallocated.

RECOMMENDATIONS: Write letters of support and offer local contributions of 1 percent total cost and \$100 per passing.