



# MARATHON COUNTY PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE and INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE MINUTES

Thursday, March 5, 2020, at 9:00 a.m.  
212 River Drive, Room 5, Wausau

Attendance: **Public Safety:**

| <u>Members</u>           | <u>Present</u> | <u>Absent</u> |
|--------------------------|----------------|---------------|
| Craig McEwen, Chair      | X              |               |
| Jim Schaefer, Vice-Chair | X              |               |
| Kelley Gabor             | X              |               |
| Jean Maszk               | X              |               |
| David Nutting            | X              |               |
| Arnie Schlei             | X              |               |
| Chris Voll               |                | X             |

**Infrastructure:**

| <u>Members</u>           | <u>Present</u> | <u>Absent</u> |
|--------------------------|----------------|---------------|
| John Robinson, Chair     | X              |               |
| Richard Gumz, Vice-Chair |                | EX            |
| Alan Christensen         | X              |               |
| Sandi Cihlar             | X              |               |
| Jeff Johnson             | X              |               |
| Allen Opall              | X              |               |
| Thomas Seubert           | X              |               |

**Others Present:** Lance Leonhard, James Griesbach, Gerry Klein, Mary Palmer, Alan Drabek, Chad Billeb, Senator Jerry Petrowski, Marcia Stencil, Gregg Wavrunek, Melinda Osterberg, Mark Voss, Heather Hoyt, Scott Bohler, Dona Schwichtenberg, Jon Graveen, Angela Hansen, Erin Wells, Dave Mack, Rebecca Frisch, Brian Kowalski, Naomi Kowles, Peter Weinschenk, Beth Nemec,

**1. Call Meeting to Order**

The meetings were called to order by Chairs Craig McEwen and John Robinson at 9:00 a.m.

**2. Public Comment (15 minute limit) – Held until later.**

**3. Approval of the Minutes of the Public Safety Meeting of February 12, 2020 and the Infrastructure meeting on February 6, 2020**

**MOTION BY MASZK; SECOND BY SCHAEFER TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE FEBRUARY 12, 2020, PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE. MOTION CARRIED.**

**MOTION BY CHRISTENSEN; SECOND BY SEEFELDT TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE FEBRUARY 6, 2020, INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE. MOTION CARRIED.**

**4. Policy Issues Discussion and Committee Determination to the County Board for its Consideration –**

**A. Telecommunications issues affecting the public health and safety**

- 1.) Background, defining the problem
- 2.) What is the current regulatory framework?
- 3.) How are complaints handled?
- 4.) How have past complaints been handled?
- 5.) What options are available?
- 6.) What is the County's role?

**2. Discussion:**

John Robinson gave the guidelines for this meeting. Public comment will be held until later and others may be invited to speak.

A video from Channel 7 WSAW was played about the problem and complaints from county residents. It laid out the problems very well.

Some concerns were expressed:

Heather Hoyt lives in a rural area in northern Marathon County (Hamburg area) and gave a testimonial and presentation on what she sees happening or rather isn't happening. Plus some of the problems such as rain and rodents on the lines makes the landlines go in and out. Wifi is sketchy in certain areas and non-existent in others.

Al Christensen, lives in the Ringle area has Frontier and when it rains, they can't use Frontier services sometimes for at least a week.

John Robinson said it also includes the City of Wausau – It's not just a rural issue. He has heard then when lines are down, it can take up to 3 weeks to get repairs.

Craig McEwen from Rothschild has received calls that they are not able to make calls from landlines. Spoke on what Public Safety has done regarding rural addressing and additional dispatchers to enhance services, but if residents can't make calls, how are these enhancements helping.

Scott Bohler, Manager, Government and External Affairs, Frontier Communications. Somethings that brought about this crisis is the 2011 regulations change – Act 22 deregulation of phone service. Providers are no longer required to provide service in all areas. With so many people having cell phones it changed reality. Frontier is not taking the position to abandon customers, but there could be delays in repair. Federal money is being used to deploy (Connect America) broadband, expand services and provide quality voice service. Five additional technicians have been reassigned to this area to enhance repair availability.

The current system is old which creates many of the weather related events. The new Operations Director in Wisconsin has a program to look at the infrastructure to see what needs to be done. There is no timeline on this. Right now there is no policy to look at repairs. Each issue is addressed individually.

Where have the CAF2 services been provided? 8900 houses needed to be upgraded. The FCC has a website with mapping. Bohler will send Klein a map with locations of households.

Senator Jerry Petrowski. - A lot of people throughout the State don't understand the issue, mostly because it doesn't affect them. Everyone throughout the State has to put money in to fix the problem. We need to make an investment. We need to find the dollars to invest. In Minnesota there is a real effort to form cooperatives to do the broadband. Smaller towers for wireless and then bury the cables. That will yield benefits.

Customers who have medic alert/lifeline can have their accounts flagged. Frontier and the Town of Weston have a partnership which includes the State for enhanced broadband.

Marathon County's concerns have been shared. He will share again the concerns he heard today.

If your service is out or you have issues, please call contact Frontier to make sure they are made aware. When a switch goes down an alarm goes off so they know, but when an individual has problems there is nothing.

Marsha Stencil lives on the Hamburg/Rib Falls town line since 2005. They have had problems since they moved there no matter who the provider is and they have tried multiple sources to have service. Spent over \$10,000 to try to get service and still don't have it. Her address is – 129019 Skye Falls Drive Athens. It's even more frustrating because Broadband maps show that she has coverage because she occasionally has it.

A local internet provider stated that replacing the old lines would fix the spotty coverage when it goes in and out, but the cost is really the issue. Finding the resources is difficult. Most of the problems are in rural areas.

Gregg Wavrunek from Senator Tammy Baldwin's office said that Mondovi in Buffalo County had the same issues last fall. She worked with Senator Ron Kind's office and after communication with Frontier and FCC the FCC said Broad band deployment and 911 were not an issue. This is mostly based on the number of formal complaints sent in. He strongly urges people to do formal complaints. He will also provide resources for grants through DATCP and also FCC.

Electrification was a right. This is no different – it's a right for all people. State and National level discussions need to happen and policy needs to be set. Treat it like a utility. We get platitudes but no action. Any help is greatly appreciated in this urgent matter.

Melinda Osterberg, explained where to find the Design 9 study on the Marathon County website. Appropriate mapping is needed. LRB 4874 addresses the mapping issue. Contact state legislators about this.

The plan looked at fixed wireless and fiber hybrid improvements. It determined what the county needs to improve access. 25 MBPS per second. See the map on page 69 of the full report or 4 of the Executive Summary. The County cannot provide the service. We would need to find a third party willing to lease our infrastructure and get the service to the homes. We cannot even apply for a grant without a third party. Legislatively this issue could be addressed by our policy makers.

Mark Voss is with a company that provides a service and puts a directional amplifier in the house. It's to provide gap coverage. The average cost of installation is between \$1,300 and \$2,200 installed and upwards to thousands for businesses. If there is no cell service or they can't detect any cell service, this is not an option. Need at least a half a bar.

Chair Robinson gave this summary:

- Frontier – corporate willingness to reevaluate plan in our area
- Flagging at risk homes
- Continued involvement of DATCP and federal and state legislators
- Longer term plan developed by Design 9, but it begs for us to look at this more and how to partner with other providers.
- Looking at dig once policy to lay conduit. What role can we have?
- Find funding sources (Gregg) – emergency response perspective?
- Role of Emergency Management Department – Do a good inventory of how many department staff have a role in this.
- Marathon County has towers and windmills. Do we have a map of where they are, who owns them and why can't we use those? Part of our problem is that counties are creatures of state government. If we don't have permission, we can't do things. We need more tools and power to provide services. Need to educate legislators and public.
- Should have a county-wide grid of what lines/wires are above and below ground and who they belong to. Even if private, let's find out what we have – tower or underground lines. How can we be prepared if we don't know. Powerful piece of public safety.
- Robinson and McEwen will get together and set agendas.

**Action:**

No action taken.

**Follow through:**

Residents are asked to file formal complaints.

Infrastructure and Public Safety will continue working on this.

**5. Operational Functions Required by Statute, Ordinance or Resolution: None**

**6. Educational Presentations/Outcome Monitoring Reports**

- A. Resolution for Policy on County Support of Sports Events Proposed to Occur on County Highways

**Discussion:**

We had a resolution that came to public safety. It passed and then County Board had more questions and it was sent back to committee. Plus it's more than just sports events. Do we even have the authority to dictate who can use the roads/highways? We need to redevelop the policy and resolution or do we really need one?

Lance – staff did meet with various department heads and City of Wausau department heads - some events start in one municipality and cross into others. The City of Wausau has an events application.

Some other counties that have large events have policies. We have a large assembly policy (12.04) which provides a good frame work to work off from. Cost recovery is absent in our current ordinance. Emergency plans are in place, EMS, and security. We are still in the gathering information stage. Many other counties have applications going through law enforcement, but is that the right place for applications? Consideration should be given to where events are going to go. We have good direction now. Between our current and new policies, the City of Wausau's and other counties we should be able to develop a good policy.

If a town has county zoning the existing ordinance exempts certain events in unincorporated areas.

These events are a quality of living and full cost recovery isn't necessary. We recoup costs through spending for hotel, meals, etc. We are open for business and we can do that here.

The County's 100% cost recovery and the City of Wausau are different and it's something that will need to be worked through. Some events are supported by Parks, Recreation and Forestry. Cost is a central piece of the policy. When can we direct full cost and when is it not the directive.

We send deputies to large events such as the balloon rally, Wisconsin Valley Fair, Lake Dubay, etc. Currently we don't charge. A private organization can hire private security or they can contract with the Sheriff's Department for \$65 per deputy per hour. There is also mutual aid with fire. Black Friday, Walmart wants security from Sheriff's Department and they have to pay.

**Follow through:**

Leonhard will send both committees members' the link to the current policy.

B. Highway Commissioner's Report

**Discussion:**

The written report from the Highway Commissioner was handed out. He has been officially notified from the State that Marathon County will receive MLS money of \$1 million for the intersections of K and WW, Town of Johnson, City of Schofield and Village of Rothschild.

**Follow through:**

No follow through requested.

C. Update on Current IT Projects, Klein

**Discussion:**

They are planning on cutting over to a new 9-1-1 system on Tuesday, but it's possible the time will change. Currently all 911 calls come into Frontier and then back to dispatch officers.

**Follow through:**

No follow through requested.

**7. Next Meeting Time, Location, Announcements and Agenda Items**

- A. Next meeting: Infrastructure will be April 2, 2020, 9:00 a.m. Highway Department  
Public Safety will be April 8, 2020, 12:00 p.m. Courthouse Assembly room

- B. Announcement: None

**8. Adjournment**

**MOTION BY NUTTING; SECOND BY MASZK TO ADJOURN THE PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE MEETING. MOTION CARRIED. (11:17 am)**

**MOTION BY OPALL; SECOND BY CHRISTENSEN TO ADJOURN THE INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE MEETING. MOTION CARRIED. (11:17 am)**

Respectfully submitted by,  
Mary Palmer