



**MARATHON COUNTY
BROADBAND TASK FORCE MEETING**

Minutes

Monday, February 21, 2022 at 3:00 P.M.

Webex/Assembly Room, 500 Forest St, Wausau WI

Members	Present/Web-Phone	Absent
Chair John Robinson	P	
Sandi Cihlar	P	
Jon Euting	W	
Sara Guild	W	
Jacob Langenhahn	W	
Milton Olson	W	
Kurt Schoenrock		x
Andy Faust	W	

Also Present: Gerry Klein, Valerie Carrillo, Noor Ali Hassan, Kathy Johnson

VIA Web or Phone: Kurt Gibbs, Eric Budleski, Lance Leonhard, Randy Fifrick, Scott Nyman, Jean Maszk, Jason Hausler, Tony Omernik, Sarah Dowiat

1. Call Meeting to Order: Chair Robinson called the meeting to order at 3:03 p.m.
2. Public Comments (15 Minute limit) - Tony Omernik - Restlawn Road, Wausau. Expressed concerns about availability of quality Broadband and ISP providers available to him. Currently has Frontier Internet and the service has been spotty. Pricing concerns were also expressed.

3. MOTION BY LAGENHAHN; SECOND BY CIHLAR TO APPROVE THE JANUARY 24, 2022 BROADBAND TASK FORCE MEETING MINUTES. MOTION CARRIED.

4. Educational Presentations and Committee Discussion:

A. Update on RDOF progress

Discussion: Chairman Robinson stated that the RDOF is not at the final stage of approval but there is reason for optimism. They have until 2030 to complete the install.

B. Update on NTIA Grant Application

Discussion: They have received a number of grant applications at this time.

C. Discussion of Other Funding Opportunities

Discussion: This will be discussed with the PSC grant application. There are still items that need to be clarified.

D. Update on ISP Initiatives

Discussion: Communication has been happening from Marathon County to school districts, and the community at large. Both fixed and wireless test connections have been conducted using the GeoPartners speed test process. Results show a good initial first response, but it was suggested that there be a second communication in the future. Chair Robinson gave an update on a document he shared with the great prosperity partnerships on the work of the task force.

5. Policy Discussion And Possible Action:

A. Review and Recommend Partnerships for the Wisconsin PSC's Broadband Access

1. Determine Criteria for evaluation of requests-Charter, Frontier, Bug Tussel, LTD,Cirrinity have sent proposals.
2. Determine role of Marathon County and expectations of other parties including local governments
3. Identify steps to support the applications

Discussion: Noor shared that applications have been received from LTD, Frontier, Cirrinity, Charter, and Bug Tussel, (5 total have been received). Some applications have been submitted for larger areas as well as smaller areas.

Information was still coming in last Friday and are still waiting for some more at the time of this meeting. Just over 5 million have been requested through these applications from the county. Currently, there is around \$114,000 in the county budget to support applications that have come in.

Chair Robinson and Noor outlined what the PSC criteria is for grant applications to inform the task force as they consider the five proposals that have come in. Chair Robinson stated that all applications have exceeded the core baseline outlined by the task force for requested service minimums, most exceeding or near 1gb speeds.

Gerry Klein shared some thoughts about the proposals and mentioned some overlap of the projects and encouraged the committee to consider proposals that do not overlap each other. Charter does not overlap.

Supervisor Guild asked a clarification question about where funds are coming from and Chair Robinson stated that he has spoken with Board Chair Gibbs and how those funding requests could be forwarded out to other standing committees. Chair Robison mentioned that the county has 26.3 million in ARPA dollars, which includes Broadband, but there are alot of needs and competition for ARPA dollars.

Chair Robinson suggested that the group prioritize or recommend projects through this meeting. Chair Robinson stated that conversations were had with both the Eastern and Western Towns Associations about assisting with funding. Supervisor Guild expressed concerns about picking winners and losers but rather seeking other partners (towns, etc.) to support these projects and strengthen their consideration at the PSC level.

Milt Olson wondered if the towns had been sent letters at this time. It was confirmed that they have not, due to not knowing where the ISPs currently serve. It is possible to do this now for an ask and forms of support. Supervisor Guild feels Cirrinity would be easy to move forward with and wonders if we can ask IPS's identify additional partners for support. Jon Euting shared the evaluation criteria from his perspective. Scott (Cirrinity) stated their grants are based around the evaluation expectations with the goal of getting all the required evaluation points. They use the grants to tell a story. Chair Robinson suggested that if all proposals were funded, most needs would be met for Marathon County.

Gerry Klein added that Bug Tussel would also need to finish their current installation. Valerie Carrillo suggested that all proposals are accepted and then look at final funding. Sandy Cihlar asked for elaboration on borrowing of funds. Chair Robinson mentioned a couple of potential options and there is not a current clarification of available LTD dollars. Board Chair Gibbs feels there will be more requests than available funds and better partnering with the ISPs needs to happen. He suggested the need to run each proposal through the criteria evaluation process before making a final determination or ranking. Chair Robinson asked if the state criteria should be used again. He feels that at this point, additional information is needed regarding the proposals. Supervisor Budleski feels that Cirrinity has value due to their history record and is ready to move forward. He is not comfortable with the larger corporations. Chair Robinson noted that there seems to be consensus regarding Cirrinity and asked if the task force can take a few days to get clarity from the rest of the ISPs and meet again next week.

Milt Olson inquired about the ARPA funds for Marathon County for 2022. Chair Robinson stated there is a specific process and request for that funding. Supervisor Gibbs added that all ARPA fund requests have criteria requirements and are presented to a committee. He also noted that Cirrinity is the least expensive request per resident served and that Frontier is the next least expensive. He recommended having a clear idea of what information is needed to make informed decisions moving forward.

Supervisor Guild wondered what the downside is to bringing proposals that cover the same area. Chair Robinson stated that the PSC allows people (businesses) to object to grants, typically stating they already serve that specific area. Chair Robinson presented a list of items to evaluate with ISPs this week. Gerry Klein will work with the maps to see if an overlap of coverage can be easily presented. Suggestions were made for various additions to the current proposals.

MOTION TO MOVE FORWARD WITH CIRRINITY MADE BY BUDLESKI, SECOND BY CIHLAR.

Discussion: Chair Robinson stated in the act of fairness, the evaluation criteria should be applied to all proposals. Supervisor Lagenhahn would like to do all the ranking at once in order to provide fairness and transparency.

MOTION RESCINDED BY BUDLESKI AND CIHLAR

- Tabled to next meeting

6. Next Meeting Topics

1. Potential Legislative Changes that Could Expand Access to Internet Services
2. Review ISP proposals

7. Next Meeting: Feb 28, 2022 3:00 pm

8. Adjournment

LAGENHAHN MOTION TO ADJOURN MEETING, OLSON SECOND. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

MEETING ADJOURNED AT 4:42pm.

Respectfully Submitted by,
Kathy Johnson