



# MARATHON COUNTY BROADBAND TASK FORCE

## MEETING AGENDA

Date & Time of Meeting: **Monday, February 15, 2021 at 4:00 P.M.**

Meeting Location: **Conference Room 5, 212 River Drive, Wausau, WI**

**Task Force Purpose:** *Develop recommendations identifying the potential role of Marathon County in facilitating the expansion of Broadband access in Marathon County. Review the Report: Broadband for Marathon County Broadband Assessment and Plan prepared by Design Nine and develop broad policies and partnership recommendations relating to the expansion of broadband/internet services throughout Marathon County.*

**Task Force Members:** Katrina Becker, Eric Budleski Sandi Cihlar, Sara Guild, Jacob Langenhahn, Emmett McBride, Kent Olson, and John Robinson

The meeting site identified above will be open to the public. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic and associated public health directives, Marathon County encourages Task Force members and the public to attend this meeting remotely. Instead of attendance in person, Task Force members and the public may attend this meeting by **telephone conference**. If Task Force members or members of the public cannot attend remotely, Marathon County requests that appropriate safety measures, including adequate social distancing, be utilized by all in-person attendees.

Persons wishing to attend the meeting by phone may call into the **telephone conference beginning five (5) minutes prior** to the start time indicated above using the following number: 1-408-418-9388 Access Code: 962 376 748 If you are prompted to provide an "Attendee Identification Number," enter the "#" sign. No other number is required to participate in the telephone conference. When you enter the telephone conference, **PLEASE PUT YOUR PHONE ON MUTE!**

### AGENDA ITEMS:

1. CALL TO ORDER
2. PUBLIC COMMENTS (15 minute limit)
3. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE JANUARY 11, 2021 BROADBAND TASK FORCE MEETING
- EDUCATIONAL PRESENTATIONS AND COMMITTEE DISCUSSION
4. UPDATE ON PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION BROADBAND EXPANSION GRANTS
5. UPDATE ON RURAL DIGITAL OPPORTUNITY FUND AUCTION
  - A. POTENTIAL ROLE FOR COUNTY TO ACCELERATE PROJECTS
6. REPORT ON NEWER BROADBAND TECHNOLOGIES, SUCH AS STAR LINK AND LEO
7. UPDATE ON EFFORTS TO EXPAND WIFI HOTSPOTS AT COUNTY FACILITIES
8. UPDATE ON POTENTIAL FUNDING OPTIONS
- POLICY DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION:
9. REVIEW OF PROPOSED AMENDMENT TO MARATHON COUNTY ZONING CODE 17.301 CHANGING TELECOMMUNICATION FACILITIES FROM A PERMITTED TO CONDITIONAL USE
10. DEFINING ROLES OF PARTNERS IN SUPPORT OF BROADBAND EXPANSION INCLUDING FUNDING
11. NEXT MEETING LOGISTICS AND TOPICS
12. NEXT STEPS
13. ADJOURN

*"Any person planning to attend this meeting who needs some type of special accommodation in order to participate should call the County Clerk's Office at 715-261-1500 or e-mail [infomarathon@mail.co.marathon.wi.us](mailto:infomarathon@mail.co.marathon.wi.us) one business day before the meeting.*

**SIGNED** /s/ John Robinson

Presiding Officer or Designee

### FAXED TO:

News Dept.at Daily Herald (715-848-9361), City Pages (715-848-5887)  
Midwest Radio Group (715-848-3158), Marshfield News (877-943-0443)  
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FAXED BY: TR

FAXED DATE: 2/11/2021

FAXED TIME: 11:25 am

### NOTICE POSTED AT COURTHOUSE

BY: TR

DATE: 2/11/2021

TIME: 11:30 am



## BROADBAND TASK FORCE MINUTES

Monday, January 11th, 2021  
212 River Drive, Room 5, Wausau WI 54403

**Attendance:**

**Present**

M. Osterberg

**Absent**

E. Budleski

K. Olson

**Also Present:**

**VIA Web or Phone:**

W. Carrol  
S. Cihlar  
K. Gibbs  
S. Guild  
J. Hausler  
G. Klein  
L. Leonhard  
J. Langenhahn  
E. McBride  
V. Resech, MCDEVCO  
J. Robinson, Chair  
Two members of the general public

### AGENDA ITEMS

1. **Call Meeting to Order**

The meeting was called to order by Chair Robinson at 4:01 pm. All participants were welcomed.

2. **Public Comments**

No public comments were presented.

Marathon County Supervisor Maszk has submitted correspondence to the Task Force indicating that residents in the Town of Guenther do not have sufficient high speed internet access.

3. **Approval of the Minutes of the December 7th, 2020 meeting**

S. Cihlar motioned to approve the minutes of the December 7th, 2020 meeting as presented.

Motion was seconded by E. McBride. J. Langenhahn asked to have the minutes corrected to notate he was absent from the meeting. Motion was carried unanimously.

#### EDUCATIONAL PRESENTATIONS AND COMMITTEE DISCUSSION

4. **Update on Public Service Commission (PSC) Broadband Expansion Grants**

Air Net was not able to submit a PSC grant as they had originally hoped. There was \$62 million dollars requested, statewide, during this grant cycle. Total allocations for the grant process from the PSC will only be \$24 million.

5. **Update on Rural Digital Opportunity Fund Auction**

Charter and Wireless LTD were the large award winners in Marathon County. M. Osterberg has attempted to reach out to them to gauge their interest in working with the Broadband Task Force.

Wireless LTD has been a smaller company to this point, but with their large award of \$1.3 billion, G. Klein commented that the company will need to expand quickly. Desire to connect with them early was expressed to ensure they focus their efforts to Wisconsin and subsequently Marathon County.

6. **Report on Potential Funding Options for Broadband Expansion**

K. Gibbs presented the group options pertaining to Broadband Funding opportunities as a result of a conversation he had with Mark O'Connell from the Wisconsin Counties Association. Tax exempt financing was discussed, with no clear direction as to if that would be the best course of action.

Public/Private partnerships were also discussed, with more information and outreach to come.

Chair Robinson discussed that the Task Force is learning from other counties as to what financing tools may be available to Marathon County and which ones would provide the best path forward.

#### POLICY DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION:

#### 7. **Identify Partners and their Role in Expanding Broadband**

##### **A. Data Gathering**

S. Guild communicated that she and J. Robinson had discussed MCDEVCO having a more active role in expanding broadband in Marathon County. The Task Force will need to outline tasks that are necessary to expand high speed internet access in Marathon County.

V. Resech relayed that MCDEVCO is in need of specific information for the MCDEVCO Board to review and authorize.

S. Guild relayed the County could enter into a contract with MCDEVCO to move this project forward.

J. Robinson stated that the Task Force needs to clarify roles and responsibilities as soon as possible so that there is a good understanding to ensure an efficient structure for work on future projects.

J. Hausler relayed that UW-Madison Extension is examining its educational role in assisting with broadband expansion efforts and that the Community Development Institute Director will meet with the County Administration and Supervisors Guild and Robinson to communicate this information.

J. Robinson mentioned that data gathering is still a great need as things move forward, especially regarding telehealth and virtual education.

M. Osterberg shared some preliminary data that she was able to generate in Lincoln County pertaining to level of service and the cost for service, which may greatly impact grant submissions in the future.

E. McBride shared information regarding data gathered within school district channels about Broadband service. He mentioned that families have a tendency to either under or over report available service.

W. Carol mentioned that moving forward patients will be asked to do a speed test of their network before scheduling a telehealth appointment.

S. Cihlar asked about existing information regarding town hall connectivity as town halls are important for elections and government operation. S. Cihlar inquired how agriculture producers are being connected with given how much modern equipment relies heavily on technology. V. Resech stated that MCDEVCO will be doing a comprehensive survey in 2021 to businesses in Marathon County and these groups will be included within that survey.

##### **B. Grant Preparation**

J. Robinson communicated that he will be meeting with the Greater Wausau Prosperity Partnership to examine additional opportunities for collaboration.

##### **C. Funding**

#### 8. **Next Meeting Logistics and Topics**

Future meeting agenda items include discussion of SpaceX, LEO and other high speed internet technologies as well as additional data needs.

#### 9. **Next Steps**

The next Task Force meeting is scheduled for February 15, 2021 at 4:00 PM.

#### 10. **Adjourn**

Due to technology issues, the meeting was abruptly adjourned at 4:53 PM.

Respectfully submitted by,  
Melinda Osterberg