



**MARATHON COUNTY
BROADBAND TASK FORCE MEETING
MINUTES**

**Wednesday, July 7, 2021 at 4:00 P.M.
Conference Room 5, 212 River Drive, Wausau, WI**

Members	Present/Web-Phone	Absent
Chair John Robinson	X	
Randy Fifrick	X	
Eric Budleski	X	
Sandi Cihlar	X	
Sara Guild	X	
Jacob Langenhahn	X	
Jon Euting	X	
Milton Olson	X	
Wade Carroll		X
Lance Leonhard	X	
Kurt Gibbs	X	
Gerry Klein	X	
Melinda Osterberg	X	
Jean Maszk	X	
Kurt Schoenrock	X	
Scott Nyman	X	
Valerie Carrillo	X	
Sarah Dowidat	X	
Scott Feldt	X	
Jonathan Fisher	X	
Chris Dickenson	X	
Bill Flood	X	
Jeremy Carolfi	X	
Scott Nyman	X	

1. Call Meeting to Order

The meeting was called to order by Chair Robinson at 4:03 pm. All participants were welcomed.

2. Public Comments (15 Minute limit)

No public comment

3. Approval of the June 21, 2021 Broadband Task Force Meeting Minutes

MOTION BY SUPERVISOR LANGENHAHN; SECOND BY GUILD TO APPROVE THE JUNE 21, 2021 BROADBAND TASK FORCE MEETING MINUTES. MOTION CARRIED.

4. Educational Presentations and Committee Discussion:

A. Kewaunee County Request for Broadband Services - Scott Feldt, Kewaunee County Administrator

Chair Robinson introduced Kewaunee County Administrator Scott Feldt and shared that the County had completed a Countywide RFP process for broadband expansion.

Scott Feldt shared information regarding Kewaunee County’s approach to broadband expansion. The County partnered with an ISP on several grant applications of which only one small application was funded by the PSC. The County issued an RFP for broadband expansion, the County received nine proposals, interviewed four providers, and selected Bug Tussel to partner with. Two applications to the PSC partnering with Bug Tussel were awarded. Feldt shared that

Kewaunee County's match was in the form of a 12 year loan. Bug Tussel will pay any interest incurred by the County, plus .50%. Through this project Kewaunee County anticipates that 85% of the County will be covered at project completion. Feldt relayed that the work of Bug Tussel has encouraged other internet service providers to expand service within the County. Kewaunee County will continue to lend money to interested internet service providers, but will not grant funds. The project uses tower equipment with an 8-10 year life span and provides speeds of 12 Mbps for a monthly fee of \$50 a month.

B. Recognition of Melinda Osterberg for her Contributions toward Broadband Expansion

The Broadband Task Force thanked Melinda Osterberg for her support of broadband expansion in Marathon County.

C. Staff Support of the Broadband Task Force

Gerry Klein will be supporting the PSC grant application with support from Sarah Dowidat in Administration. Sara Guild relayed the EEECD Committee has been in discussion with UW-Madison Extension on what support educators can provide the Broadband Task Force, the Committee is also examining different project management structures.

6. Policy Discussion And Possible Action:

A. Review and rank potential internet service provider partnership proposals for 2021 WI PSC ARPA Broadband Expansion Grant program

Chair Robinson indicated that the PSC ARPA grant criteria are different from the annual PSC grant program and that there is a bias towards fiber projects. Marathon County has received four proposals to date and are included in the meeting packet.

Scott Nyman, Wittenberg Telephone, introduced their proposal of a 6-mile fiber build connecting 101 homes and three businesses. Nyman indicated the proposed area was determined by PSC's ARPA map, as the area is depicted as underserved on PSC mapping.

Jeremy Carolfi, Country Wireless, stated that the two areas are within Country Wireless's service area and they are adjacent to existing fiber. The SW Marathon County Project is anticipated to be 28.94 miles of fiber serving 223 households and the Maryel Subdivision Projects will be 6.38 miles of fiber serving 113 households. Country Wireless is requesting \$500,000 in funding from Marathon County and 1.2 million from the PSC.

Bug Tussel is requesting Marathon County to underwrite a \$16,600,000 loan for broadband expansion. The project includes middle mile 215 miles of fiber and 13 broadband towers. Bug Tussel will also request \$1.5 million in PSC funding.

LTD Wireless is \$250,000 in funding from Marathon County for a \$1.184 million fiber broadband project. LTD wireless anticipates that 20,200 people will be served upon project completion.

The Task Force discussed speeds provided by the proposals, with Bug Tussel and Country Wireless providing phased proposals that may not immediately provides symmetrical 100 Mbps service. LTD and Wittenberg Telephone will provide symmetrical gig service.

The PSC ARPA criteria prioritizes fiber service and "last mile connection." The Task Force discussed supporting Cirrinity's proposal given the PSC ARPA grant requirements. The Task Force

discussed the ambiguity of Country Wireless a grant and loan combination.

County Board Chair Gibbs suggested that the Task Force determine a per household basis cost share for the Wittenberg/Cirrinity and Country Wireless proposals.

Chair Robinson suggested that the \$177,000 remaining County budgeted funds be divided on a per household basis for the Cirrinity and Country Wireless proposals with the providers providing certified numbers in anticipation of preparation of PSC grant materials.

Olson motioned to support the Cirrinity, Country Wireless and Bug Tussel proposals, including \$62,992 for Cirrinity with the balance of the capital improvement program broadband funding allocated to Country Wireless. Chilar seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously. The County Board will need to evaluate the funding for the Bug Tussel proposal.

Chair Robinson indicated that template letters of support will be available for Task Force members to circulate. Letters will need to be provided to the ISPs by July 21st.

Marathon County will be seeking input on use of APRA funds from the Marathon County Towns Association and other members of the general public at four different forums.

B. Review of Marathon County Broadband Survey and Distribution Plan

Discussion and action was tabled due to time constraints and will be on the July 26th meeting.

C. Development of a Request for Proposals for Broadband Service

Discussion and action was tabled due to time constraints and will be on the July 26th meeting.

6. Next Meeting Logistics And Topics

Chair Robinson stated the next regular meeting will be July 26, 2021.

7. Adjournment

**Chilar motioned to adjourn, seconded by Guild. Motion carried unanimously. MEETING
ADJOURNED AT 6:37 PM.**