



BROADBAND TASK FORCE MINUTES

Tuesday, August 17, 2020
212 River Drive, Room 5, Wausau WI 54403

Attendance:

Present

John Robinson, Chair
Nancy Anderson

Absent

Also Present:

VIA Web or Phone:

Katrina Becker
Eric Budleski
Wade Carroll
Sandi Cihlar
Richard Downey
Randy Fifrick
Kurt Gibbs
Sara Guild
Jason Hausler
Gerard Klein
Lance Leonhard
Ka Lo
Emmett McBride
Melinda Osterberg
Peter Weinschenk, Record Review

AGENDA ITEMS

1. Call Meeting to Order

Meeting was called to order by Chair John Robinson at 4:00 pm. All participants welcomed.

2. Public Comments

No public comments

3. Approval of the Minutes of the July 27, 2020 Meeting.

Motion to approve by E Budleski, seconded by S. Guild.

EDUCATIONAL PRESENTATIONS AND COMMITTEE DISCUSSION

4. Update on Research Regarding County Broadband Authority

Chair Robinson reported that he had several discussions with the Wisconsin Counties Association related to broadband access in Wisconsin. The Counties Association is conducting research on this topic and will complete their study in August. They are not examining the State statutory framework or the role of Internet Service Providers (ISPs). J. Robinson also spoke with M Rainbolt, Government Affairs Associate, regarding the question of whether counties are eligible to become more actively engaged, owning a portion of the delivery system. Answer is forthcoming.

5. Presentation on Public-Private Partnership Broadband Case Studies

Please refer to links sent from M. Osterberg regarding the presentation by Oneida County in 2016. J. Robinson

asked attendees to review the summary. The case studies in the Design Nine Study provided a lot of background information on what other communities have done. The Task Force will examine a speaker to present at a future meeting.

6. Marathon County Broadband Funding

L. Leonhard reported that the County Board will address the 2020 annual budget funding and set aside funds for use relative to broadband expansion. The County Board will discuss use of these funds and Route to Recovery (from Federal Care Act) funds for broadband expansion. Route to Recovery Funds must be used by the end of the year. The decision was made to approach the towns, villages and cities in Marathon County and ask them if they would be interested in transferring a portion of their allocation to help support the cost of expanding internet services, especially where service is inadequate. We're hoping to generate sufficient funds to start a pilot project(s) in the county.

POLICY DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION:

7. Establish Baseline Broadband Speed

M. Osterberg shared a summary document of what speeds are needed to support specific uses and the FCC broadband definition. The Task Force discussed the various speeds that are available throughout the County. It was also recognized that cellular hotspots must be considered as well, especially from a public safety standpoint as there are areas where there is no internet or cell phone service. The Task Force determined that they should request 100 Mbps symmetrical service. If that level of service cannot be provided, the internet service provider would need to provide a rationale for the reduced level of service. The Task Force also established a minimum speed of 25 Mbps download/3 Mbps upload speed for County supported projects. A meeting has been scheduled with the Internet Service Providers this month.

8. Short Term Goals:

A. Use of Routes to Recovery and Other Funding Sources

Discussion held earlier (see no. 6) Funds can also come from the next round of Public Service Commission (PSC) grants. The PSC will begin accepting applications September 1.

B. Development of a Pilot Project

G. Klein reported on the Design 9 plan for broadband expansion which provides a plan for future expansion. Currently, the Task Force is examining data collected from various places, i.e., schools, libraries, polling places and outlying municipalities, and identifying gaps where the County could do pilot projects. Towns that will be allocating Routes to Recovery funds for broadband expansion should also be included if they have gaps in cell or internet service, specifically the northern tier of the County which can also be targeted in a PSC grant.

C. Expanded Public Wi-Fi Access

Several library facilities do not have adequate Wi-Fi, Route to Recovery funds can be allocated for these improvements. The County will need to determine which facilities need improvement and identify the appropriate technology to expand service.

D. Preparation for August Meeting with Internet Service Providers

The County met with the Internet Service Providers in March and will be scheduling a meeting with them this month. Please review the March meeting notes (included in your packet from the July 27 BBTF meeting). If you cannot attend this meeting, please send one of the committee members your questions.

9. Long Term Goals:

A. Review of Design Nine Broadband Feasibility Study Recommendations

The Task Force discussed this design expanding service, however, the Internet Service Providers were not interested in leasing fiber.

NEXT MEETING LOGISTICS AND TOPICS

10. **Next Steps**

- County board will be adopting resolution for routes to recovery funds
- Update library coverage
- Begin to define pilot project(s)
- RFPs for pilot project(s)
- Routes to recovery and Public Service Commission grants
- Secure speaker from Oneida County
- Inform area municipalities that they can transfer Routes to Recovery funds to the County for broadband expansion

11. **Set Future Meeting Dates and Schedule**

The Task Force scheduled meetings for every very third Monday until the end of 2020. M. Osterberg will send the group a calendar invite.

12. **Adjourn**

There being no further business to discuss, meeting adjourned at 5:27 PM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Nancy Anderson