	BROADBAND TASK FORCE **MINUTES**	

Monday, September 14, 2020
212 River Drive, Room 5, Wausau WI 54403

Attendance: **Present** **Absent**

John Robinson, Chair
Melinda Osterberg

Also Present:
VIA Web or Phone:

Nancy Anderson
Katrina Becker
Eric Budleski
Wade Carroll
Sandi Cihlar
Richard Downey
Randy Fifrick
Sara Guild
Nathan Harder
Stacey Johnson
Gerard Klein
Lance Leonhard
Amanda Ley
Emmett McBride
Scott Nymen
Kent Olson
Paul Osterman
Rachel Schemelin

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 Minutes of the August 17, 2020 Meeting.**
Motion to approve by S. Cihlar and seconded by E. Budleski.

EDUCATIONAL PRESENTATIONS AND COMMITTEE DISCUSSION

4.   **Presentation on Oneida County Broadband Expansion Project – Stacey Johnson**
S. Johnson, WEDC Regional Economic Director presented on Oneida County's broadband expansion project.
Previous to her role at the WEDC, she served as the Director of the Oneida County Economic Development
Corporation. Johnson explained how the Oneida County Economic Development Corporation worked to enhance
broadband; applied for PSC grants and answered questions Task Force members had on partnerships that were
necessary for the project's success. Johnson also serves on the Governor's State Broadband Task Force and is
available to answer any other questions that may arise after today's meeting.

5.   **Presentation on Rural Digital Opportunity Fund Auction – Scott Nyman**
S. Nyman, Cirrinity Corporation, presented on the Rural Digital Fund Auction, also known as Option 904 with the FCC
which would bring high speed fixed broadband service to rural homes and small businesses that lack it. The FCC has

set aside $20.4 billion to be awarded over a 10 year period in 2 phases. Bids will be accepted for four performance tiers, each with varying speed and usage allowances and either high or low latency. Scott displayed a map of eligible auction blocks (areas determined to be eligible for the auction within Marathon County) and explained the auction reverse bidding process and costs. Bidding for these auction blocks will start next month and the winning bidders have to build 40% of the project by the end of three years. These blocks total an estimate of $20 million that will be available to the successful bidder for the next 10 years for expanding broadband access under this program. If no one bids on these auction blocks, they will put out for bids in Phase 2.

POLICY DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION

6. **Routes to Recovery Fund Use**
Please refer to the letter in your packet from K. Gibbs which was sent to all Marathon County municipalities with regard to the potential reallocation of their Routes to Recovery funds to be used for broadband expansion by the County. We received communication from several of these communities that they are requesting reallocation of the funds. Per L. Leonhard, in order for us to be reimbursed under the Routes to Recovery program, we must incur the cost by November 6, i.e., "pay the bill." His understanding is that the actual work performed must be done during the "Pandemic." A substantial amount of work needs to take place no later than the first quarter of 2021. We expect to hear from the communities by the end of the week. There are also additional criteria that projects reimbursed under this program would need to meet.
    A. **Existing Tower Use**
    B. **Tower Infrastructure Acquisition**
    C. **Update on Libraries and Polling Locations as Wi-Fi Hotspots**
    G. Klein introduced Nathan Harder. Nathan is a network engineer expert and has been retained by Marathon County. From the meeting with the ISPs, he will be researching triangular steel towers, cost, location, and how the County can pre-negotiate. Harding will also research cellular and broadband capacity at the County voting and library sites, determine the capacity to add equipment to the County's West Wayside tower, and determine the possibility of making the tower available to two different wireless internet service providers. DC Everest School District and the Wausau Community Area Network will partner to increase speeds and service to the Rothschild Elementary School, the new Riverside Fire Station and other Village of Weston sites including the police department. Preliminary research on Hatley and Riverview schools is underway.

    D. **School District Survey Information – Rachel Schemelin**
    R. Schemelin is the E-Rate and Broadband Education Consultant for the Wisconsin Dept. of Public Instruction. Schemelin shared how DPI is currently supporting school districts in their broadband outreach and initiatives. DPI is encouraging school districts to collect information from their families, input that data into local student information systems, which would then feed into the State database. This information would be used to build dashboards for districts to visualize and identify their digital equity gaps. Please have your school districts reach out to R. Schemelin if they need assistance in gathering information to get to the State. This could be a good tool to use for Road to Recovery projects. S. Johnson also added that the more schools participate in DPI surveys, the more attention they will receive from various funding groups looking to connect K-12 students. Data collections are optional. E. McBride indicated that the DC Everest School District should have their data to the State in the next couple of weeks.

7. **August Internet Service Provider Meeting Summary**
A summary of this meeting is in your packet. The timeline to use the Route to Recovery Funds was a burden that limited the ISPs interest in the program. The ISPs identified a need for Marathon County to track addresses where they could not provide service. This address database could possibly happen through the DPI process, however, residences that do not have school age children would need to be gathered separately.

8. **Public Service Commission Grant Opportunity**
The Public Service Grant process is underway. Applications are due in December. Next meeting discussions should include what role Marathon County should have, as the County will need to work with an Internet Service Provider on any future applications for PSC funds. G. Klein pointed out that the FCC map has incorrect information and listed areas having high speed internet available where that service is unavailable. The PSC is aware that their maps are incorrect. Marathon County should create a map that depicts accurate available service information that can be used in future funding applications. Northwoods Connect was the only ISP that submitted a proposal which is in the meeting packet. Paul Osterman, Northwoods Connect, explained their proposal. They are working in Forest County where they are using fiber from the tower to the home which is another idea for a project. He reminded members that the grant applications must be completed ASAP. The proposed towers would be able to support equipment for cell providers as well.

9.   **Next Meeting Logistics and Topics**
10.   **Next Steps**
October 5, 2020.
- Opportunity for Technical Assistance (S Johnson)
- Obtain List of Bidders for our priority areas (S Nyman)
- Continue to track the Route to Recovery Funds and how we might use them
- Tracking school district data to capture addresses with no service to create our own mapping
- Create task force support committee

11.   **Adjourn**

Respectfully Submitted by:
Nancy M Anderson