



BROADBAND TASK FORCE MINUTES

Monday, October 26, 2020
212 River Drive, Room 5, Wausau WI 54403

Attendance:

Present

Melinda Osterberg

Absent

Katrina Becker

Also Present:

VIA Web or Phone:

Nancy Anderson
Eric Budleski
Wade Carroll
Sandi Cihlar
Randy Fifrick
Jonathan Fisher
Kurt Gibbs
Sara Guild
Gerard Klein
Jacob Langenhahn
Lance Leonhard
Amanda Ley
Emmet McBride
Vicki Resech, MCDEVCO
John Robinson, Chair

AGENDA ITEMS

1. **Call Meeting to Order**

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

2. **Public Comments**

No public comments

3. **Approval of the Minutes of the October 5, 2020 Meeting.**

Motion to approve by S. Cihlar

Second by: E. Budleski

All in favor, motion carried.

EDUCATIONAL PRESENTATIONS AND COMMITTEE DISCUSSION

4. **MCDEVCO's Role in Facilitating Broadband Access Efforts (Short and Long Term)**

V. Resech, MCDEVCO, stated that at this time, they do not have the capacity to help with the grant applications that are due (Dec. 1). They are still interested in working with this task force in the long term. J. Robinson thanked V. Resech and MCDEVCO for their interest and willingness to work with us.

5. **Updates on Routes to Recovery Efforts**

G. Klein reported that work continues with R. Illick to improve wireless access outside the library locations. Task force members are also working on an opportunity to run fiber to improve the internet connection at the Hatley Library and the Hatley DC Everest Elementary School. These two projects will use the funds that municipalities have re-allocated to the county. Internally, projects have been focusing on conference rooms and making them more compatible for working remotely, i.e., pulling down smart boards, installing TVs, purchasing video conferencing systems. Per L. Leonhard, the county will be able to submit the costs for reimbursement to cover

above and beyond what is being spent on all of these projects. G. Klein also reported that he submitted a grant for a fiber connection at the Solid Waste Facility for staff to work remotely and access systems and the Hatley Highway Facility which would allow more people to work at that space.

POLICY DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION

6. Refine Evaluation Criteria and Process for Use of Marathon County Funds for Broadband Projects

The evaluation criteria has been updated and organized. If this criteria is adopted, it should be adapted into an application process to send to the Internet Service Providers. Discussion was held on the criteria being consistent with state requirements and making sure that we are serving our rural constituents. S.Cihlar asked if anything has come out of the Governor's Task Force on Broadband. M. Osterberg will invite Andy Faust, North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission, to speak at our next task force meeting. E. McBride made a motion to accept the criteria and the process. S. Guild seconded. Motion carried.

Chair Robinson shared with members that in the interest of time and resources, the task force keeps moving our efforts in expanding broadband services to the underserved businesses and residences in Marathon County and should limit our discussion on internal projects unless they impact broadband expansion to the residences and businesses in the county.

7. Identify Potential Partners for Funding and Supporting Future Broadband Expansion Efforts

Updates were made by task force members highlighting the meetings with the parties that are interested in expanding broadband services in Marathon County through the PSC grant application process or the Rural Digital Opportunity Fund Auction. Discussion was held on how we can move forward with providers as well as identifying other partners as we move forward on the PSC grant applications. (Please refer to Packet.) G.Klein reported on Northwoods Connect's 5 tower proposal, each at 250-300 feet and a price of \$300,000 ea. It still does not address the area northwest of Athens. In discussions with the Athens School District, there may be another school joining that district which would make the need greater for broadband service. M. Osterberg reported on the Cirrinity proposal which is approximately 7 miles of fiber from the Hatley area serving 83 homes. The cost would be just under \$200,000 to be competitive for this grant cycle and would allow them to continue on Hwy Q and Hwy J expanding access. E. Budleski mentioned that Spectrum services the town of Hatley and their service runs down Highway Y to Highway 153. J. Robinson spoke on behalf of D. Sweeney, Network Professionals, who was planning on attending today. The proposed project would consist of silos and towers in the Trapp River Golf Course area in the town of Texas as well as the Little Chicago area. They are also looking at putting equipment on the new Wausau water tower that would serve in the town of Stettin. W. Carroll stated that Starlink is open for beta and Marshfield Clinic has a number of physicians on the system. They are looking at rural areas to test their technology. W. Carroll will send M. Osterberg the link to share so people can "sign-up" for this opportunity. L. Leonhard reported on Bug Tussel. They have the technology, integrating wireless delivery with the provision of cell service. They partner with AT&T and are interested in growing in our area. They also bring an educational component with their service.

J. Robinson reported on a meeting held with the Greater Wausau Prosperity Partnership and an opportunity to partner with them in the short term.

S Cihlar suggested looking at the Land O Lakes American Connection Project Broadband Coalition. She will contact them for more information.

W. Carrol reported on About Health and the possibility of a partnership.

8. Public Service Commission Grant Opportunity

Round 1 will begin this week on October 29th. There are a number of vendors that have been approved to bid and there is potential opportunity to work with those parties. As we are still learning about the auction, we are looking at our role and how we can leverage our dollars to accelerate and expand the service in those census tracts.

Senator J. Petrowski reached out to G. Klein to see what could be done legislatively for the broadband effort. S. Cihlar asked if the Wisconsin Counties Association could help, legislatively.

9. **Next meeting logistics and topics**

J. Robinson recommended creating a work group of people to review the proposals to ensure that these companies are applying our criteria. He would like the group to meet between now and our next task force meeting which is scheduled for November 16. E. Budleski, C. Fallin, Aspirus, E. McBride, G. Klein and M. Osterberg will make up the work group and meet accordingly.

10. **Next Steps**

- Grant application process with potential partners
- Report from work group relative to PSC grant process
- What is our role in the auctions, what process should we utilize
- Learn more about SpaceX, About Health, Land o Lakes Cooperative and the Greater Wausau Prosperity Partnership

11. **Adjourn**

There was no further business to discuss, the meeting adjourned at 5:30 PM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Nancy Anderson