

BROADBAND COMMITTEE

COMMITTEE: BROADBAND
DATE: FEBRUARY 28, 2023
TIME: 4:30 P.M.
PLACE: FOREST COUNTY BOARDROOM

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Terry Lukas called the meeting or order at 4:30 p.m. and read the agenda.

ROLL CALL

Members Present: Terry Lukas, Lynne Black, & Bill Chaney

Members Absent: Cindy Gretzinger

Other Members: – Kayla Littleton, Chris Shafer and Amber Rehberg

Absent: Stephanie Statezny

Others Present: Tom & Carol Tallier, Mark Dodge, Mary Belland, Chris Stark, Wally Leja, and Jaron McCallum (Remote)

APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

Motion by Chaney, second by Black, to approve the agenda. All present voting (AYE) Motion Carried.

APPROVE MINUTES FROM NOVEMBER 29TH, 2022 MEETING.

Motion by Chaney, second by Black, to approve the meeting minutes. All present voting (AYE) Motion Carried.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Jaron McCullum with the PSC (Public Service Commission) was on remotely and he went through the Local Planning Grant Program. There's \$1.5 Million dollars, but it will depend on how many "Opt In" as to what funding will be available for each entity.

- BEAD Local Planning Grant Program (Have Website set-up)
- Counties / Tribes / Regional Areas
- County & Locals need to "Opt In" to receive funding by March 7th, 2023
- Can "Opt In" alone or regionally with others
- Chris Shafer will be getting the "Opt In" letter of intent ready and submitted for Forest County alone.
- Formula Funding but only for **PLANNING** Phase
- 5 year action plan – due the end of August 2023
- High Level Reporting will be required
- Administration of the funds was questioned and will need to be determined
- They have a newsletter on their webpage and this is a good way to stay in touch

UPDATE ON BUG TUSSEL ON PROJECT STATUS:

Mark Dodge explained the project status for Phase #1, Phase #2 and Phase #3 (this is currently being drafted). Mark Dodge explained Phase #3 to the committee and more documentation will be presented to the County Board in March and then a resolution will be presented to the Board to vote on in April. Mark shared that 1100 residents in Forest County are already being served through the progress on Phases #1. Phase #2 will begin in the spring of 2023 and this project is for Middle Mile Fiber to the home. Phase #2 project in conjunction with Phase #1 will lay the groundwork for the Phase #3 project.

Chris Shafer stated that he's been working hand in hand with Bug Tussel and they have done everything that he's asked for. Broadband in one of Forest Counties "Signature" projects that we're applying for grant funding through the RPN (Rural Partnership Network) and Chris was in Washington DC last week to present the grant funding requests on behalf of Forest County. Bug Tussel was instrumental in helping Chris get a plan together (on short notice) for this presentation. It's important to have projects that are "Shovel Ready" when opportunities such as this arise, because time is of the essence. Bringing stable and affordable Broadband to all of Forest County has been a top priority for several years. Now the opportunity has developed to possibly receive some significant grant funding and Forest County was in a position to pull all the figures together for Chris's presentation. Hopefully we'll hear something very soon.

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS:

Project Updates
RPN Status Update
Digital Navigator Update

NEXT MEETING:

Tuesday, March 28, 2023 at 4:30 p.m.
4th Tuesday of the month in the County Board Room.

ADJOURNMENT:

Motion by Chaney, second by Black to adjourn. All present voting (AYE) Motion Carried.
6:01 p.m.

MEETING MINUTES SUBMITTED BY: LYNNE BLACK