

BROADBAND COMMITTEE

COMMITTEE: BROADBAND
DATE: FEBRUARY 27, 2024
TIME: 4:30 P.M.
PLACE: FOREST COUNTY BOARDROOM

CALL TO ORDER

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

ROLL CALL

Members Present: Gretzinger (phone), Lukas, Skallerud

Absent:

Other Members: Stephanie Montgomery (E.M. Director) (Teams), Chris Shafer (FCEDP), Amber Rehberg (UW-Extension Director), Kayla Littleton (LCC)

Others Present: Nora Matuszewski, Representative from Bug Tussel (Mitch Olson), Steve Watson, Brittany Beyer, Mary Sullivan

APPROVE AGENDA

Motion by Gretzinger to approve the agenda, second by Shafer. All present voting (AYE). Motion carried.

APPROVE MINUTES FROM JANUARY 23, 2024 MEETING

Motion by Skallerud to approve the minutes from the January 23, 2024 meeting, second by Shafer. All present voting (AYE). Motion carried.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Mary Sullivan (Chair-Popple River) was present to offer her help with the Broadband projects. She also shared that a letter was sent to the County Board last year that went unanswered and she told the committee there is no tower in Popple River. There was discussion of having a special meeting and bringing in the towns. She felt the Towns need to hear from the County.

DIGITAL NAVIGATOR UPDATE

Watson updated the committee on progress of the program, bringing in nine (9) new clients in January and twenty (20) in February. His concern now since the program is growing what happens in the future.

Three issues he wanted to address with the committee were:

- 1) Sustainability of the program- What happens when the funding runs out? Are there new grants coming out that could possibly fund the program without matching funds?
- 2) Plan – He has put together information for a County Digital Equity plan, which included: Handling how things are transitioning through the County, what programs are available through the County and could both tribes come together with the County.
- 3) Having a plan in place to help to move forward with the Digital Navigator position? Is there a need? What other resources are available to have the program for future funding beyond the current grant?
- 4) Is the committee in agreement to start investing time in a plan? The plan will set parameters, goals using the Google grant (Watson).

Brittany Beyer told the committee there is pathways to funding. State equity plan now could be a mechanism for funding and maybe the success of this program could be the pilot for a plan written by Watson.

Motion by Skallerud to allow Watson to create a plan within the grant funding available now and bring it back to the committee for review, second by Shafer. All present voting (AYE). Motion carried.

DISCUSSION ON INTERNET SERVICES FOR TOWN OFFICES; POSSIBLE ACTION

The Clerk presented to the committee the agreements for internet at the town offices. Olson asked to have all the signed agreements forwarded to him. There was discussion about towns that have contacted Bug Tussel to get the internet service but, have not received a response from them. Olson explained that might just be an employee issue and his contact information will be forwarded to Naunkca.

PROJECT UPDATES WITH BUG TUSSEL (MITCH OLSON)

They are not yet live on the Harter tower yet in Freedom but, should be by March or April. Cavour and Nelma are the next sites going up, they are up against road restrictions right now. There are calls coming in from the Carter area about getting internet, right by the Casino. There is a hope they are not outside of the scope of the project.

TRIBAL BROADBAND UPDATES

Olson was thanked for coming on for the meeting. Shafer has been working with the Sokaogon on a 22 million grant with the Tribal Bureau of Affairs to get internet to their members outside of tribal land. This could possibly help fill the holes the County has as well. This money only covers tribal members, which is around 297 in Forest and surrounding counties. They will spider out fiber from the Tribal land and then they could work with Bug Tussel to get others not tribal members hooked up as well. This is very hopeful for everyone.

PSC BEAD FUNDING UPDATE

The funding has a grant cycle that starts in June and they have weekly office hours to answer questions. This type of funding is a three (3) month process, with one (1) week to look at maps for the Broadband. There is a challenge process after the initial proposal, which would include local government, ISP's, tribal entities and non-profits.

UPDATE – FCEDP COORDINATOR

None

UW-EXTENSION – FEBRUARY 2024 BROADBAND WORKSHOPS; POSSIBLE ACTION

There are two workshops on Broadband, one in Green Bay on April 10th and the other in Antigo on May 22nd.

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS/SETTING NEXT MEETING

- Broadband bonding
- Broadband updates
- FCEDP Coordinator updates

ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Shafer to adjourn, second by Skallerud. All present voting AYE. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 6:30 p.m.

These minutes are not official and are subject to change. They will be officially approved at the next scheduled Broadband meeting.