

MEETING MINUTES
Eau Claire County
Broadband Committee
Thursday, February 17, 2022
4:00 P.M.
Remote Meeting via WebEx Events

Those wishing to make public comments must submit their name and address no later than 30 minutes prior to the meeting to rod.eslinger@co.eau-claire.wi.us

Comments are limited to 3 minutes; you will be called on during the public comment section of the meeting. Written comments will also be accepted and should be submitted to the e-mail address listed above.

Join WebEx Meeting: <https://eauclairecounty.webex.com> Meeting ID: 167 775 1184, Password: qMPYqiCn574

*Meeting audio can be listened to using this Audio conference dial in information.

Public Access: Dial in Number: 1-415-655-0001 Access Code: 167 775 1184 ##

**Mute your device upon entry*

Members Present: Donald Mowry, Luke Hanson, Collin Pomplun, Ann Nielsen, Tim Laubach, Thomas Lange, Lynn Thompson, Scott Hoffman, and Mark Zuber.

Staff Present: Rodney J. Eslinger, Director of Planning and Development, Greg Dachel, Director of Information Systems

Others Present: Dave Hayden, John LeBrun, Travis McFarland, Kent Klima, Jessica Jansen, Jen Meyer, Aleta Kaufmann, Jim Jermain

1. Call to order and confirmation of meeting notice.

The meeting was called to order at 4:00 p.m. and the meeting notice was confirmed.

2. Roll Call – Members present are noted above.
3. Public Comment (limit to 3 minutes per person) – Jim Jermain of AT&T spoke about plans to expand their services on the west side of the City of Eau Claire.

Kent Klima and Travis McFarland from the Bloomer Telephone Company addressed the committee about its operations and services. They discussed past and current community service projects that the company has contributed to with donations and their services in the Bloomer area. Bloomer Telephone Company will be applying for a PSC Broadband Expansion Grant that would serve Town of Seymour.

4. Update of the Release of County ARPA Match Funds – **Discussion/Action**

Rod Eslinger provided an update to the committee regarding the release of the ARPA fund match to the Town of Drammen of \$89,700. Mr. Eslinger is keeping a spreadsheet of requested, pending and future ARPA fund matches. This will assist with the ARPA fund tracking and reporting. Norb Kirk, Finance Director indicated that the ARPA request application is a sufficient checklist.

5. PSC Broadband Survey – **Discussion/Action**

Rod Eslinger indicated that the PSC is developing a statewide broadband survey. Dave Hayden and Greg Dachel mentioned the Momentum West offers a speed test option and the WI GEO Software offers great analytics.

6. Internet Service Provider (ISP) Updates – Discussion/Action

Jim Germain of AT&T provided more details regarding his company's plan to serve 2,500 customers on the western side of Eau Claire with multi-level gigabyte service. This area is mostly underserved or unserved by highspeed internet. He indicated that the AT&T customers would qualify for the Affordable Connectivity Program, provided all the criteria is met. The build out time frame is unknown currently.

Kent Klima and Travis McFarland addressed the committee again. They shared that the Bloomer Telephone Company is a privately held company with shareholders. In 2007 the company rebuilt its entire exchange platform. In 2018, the company provided highspeed internet service to all addresses within the Bloomer School District. It's been successful with past PSC applications and is currently building out projects in Dunn and Chippewa Counties. Take rates in these services areas are around 72% to 75%. They are asking for support for its current proposal that would serve the Town of Hallie in Chippewa County and the Town of Seymour in Eau Claire County with fiber to premises. Travis mentioned that the Town of Seymour committed \$325,000 of its ARPA funds to the project. Overall project is a 5.3-million-dollar fiber install, serving 470 homes. He estimated that the project would cost about \$10,000 per passing, but the entire Town of Seymour would be covered with a four tier high-speed internet service model.

7. Update on PSC grant applications – **Discussion/Action**

Town of Union – Jennifer Meyer

Working with 24/7 Telecom to cover the rest of the town that is underserved or unserved by highspeed internet

Town of Pleasant Valley – Jen Meyer

Working with Charter and TCC to cover the entire township. Companies are working together so there is no duplication or overlap in their services.

TCC lower third of town – Board committed \$54K, may be increased

Total cost is \$330K, 6 miles, 27 locations?

Charter will cover the northern two thirds of the town – currently covered by CenturyLink

Charter will cover every household, and part of Town of Washington

Pleasant Valley cost is \$2.7 million

Town committed \$100K, requesting \$100K from county

Covering white-space areas, outside RDOF areas – only a small amount of RDOF in Pleasant Valley
428 locations?

Town of Clear Creek – Tri County Communications

Asking for a letter of support

Town of Washington – Charter portion of the above project

Cost \$709K for 445 locations

Town considering \$91.2K, requesting \$91.2K from County

\$583K for 89 locations –

What is timeline for County match?

Coverage split down the middle – good coverage down Hwy 93 but coverage lacking outside the Hwy 93 corridor.

8. Letters of Support for PSC applications – Discussion/Action

A motion was made by Mark Zuber, seconded by Tim Laubach to approve letters of support for the Towns of Union, Seymour, Washington, and Pleasant Valley and to approve matching funds, as long as the requests don't exceed the Towns' ARPA funds, contingent on each Town's successful PSC Broadband Expansion grant award. The motion passed.

- The County Broadband Committee application will be submitted by each Township if their PSC grant application is awarded.

9. SpaceX Starlink Pilot Project Update (Greg Dachel) – Discussion/Action

This update was postponed to a future meeting.

10. Digital Equity/Inclusion Workgroup Update – Discussion/Action

Advisory Group met and decided to pursue a PSC Nonprofit Access grant application for the Digital Equity and Inclusion project. The team has been working on the grant application and hope to have a draft to send out to the Advisory Group by Friday. The Advisory Group is scheduled to meet next Tuesday, February 22 to review the application in detail. That will give 4 or 5 days to edit the application and submit it by the March 1 deadline

11. Review/Approval of January 20, 2022, Committee Meeting Minutes – Discussion/Action

The committee reviewed the meeting minutes of January 20, 2022, Lynn Thompson, motioned to approve the minutes as submitted, Mark Zuber seconded the motion; motion carried on a voice vote with all in favor of the motion.

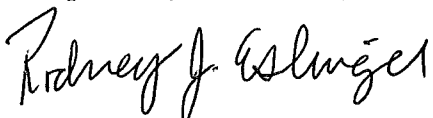
12. Next Steps and future meetings – **Discussion/Action**

- a. Future Meeting: March 17, 2022

13. Adjourn

Adjourn Action: Meeting adjourned by unanimous consent at 5:29 p.m.

Respectively submitted by,



Rodney J. Eslinger,
Clerk for the Broadband Committee
Director of Planning and Development

David Hayden

