

Allegan County Broadband Action Workgroup
March 17, 2022
Minutes

CTO: 4:00 pm

Roll Call: A quorum was present when the following members answered the roll:

In the room: Austin Marsman, Tim Kotas, Jim Storey, Gerald Williams, and Scott Beltman

Via Zoom: Mandy Cooper, Ted Siler, and Penny Bursma

Presentation: Jeff Snyder, Senior Manager – Govt and Regulatory Affairs, Comcast, Heartland Region.

Comcast serves Holland, Saugatuck and Douglas cities, and several townships in Allegan County. Latest investment is to connect 200 customers in Casco Township. He described the technical aspects of the services Comcast provides. Comcast is actively working with state and federal governments; some have signed services agreements. Comcast will invest in conjunction with local governments up to the amount needed to ensure the required return on company investment. Jeff outlined the various customer services available to Comcast customers. Comcast is eager and willing to partner with the county either through response to an RFP or initiating its own proposal.

Questions:

Beltman, what is speed to house?

Answer: can do 1.2 gig using HFC (hybrid fiber coax) cable.

Beltman: assume that is not as big capacity as the fiber to the home.

Answer: yes, but it is adequate.

Marsman: what is cost?

Answer: it depends on the speed desired by customer.

Dunham: what is lowest cost and speed?

Answer: \$9.95 monthly; 25M down is being upgraded to 50M down and 5M up.

Kotas: what has been your experience in working with governments?

Answer: We look for the ones closest to our system and have a strong technical staff including great relationships with vendors.

Kotas: can you explain the take rate experience?

Answer: the most recent is Armada Township in Macomb County, where a 400 customer project was completed.

Kotas: what is the internet essentials program take in Allegan County.

Answer: Jeff does not know the take rate.

Siler: how does one qualify for the Internet Essentials program?

Answer: receiving any federal assistance program. Some follow-up on the from Casco programs.

Minutes: March 3 meeting minutes were approved without objection.

Reports:

Administrator Sarro

Sarro recommends that the workgroup concentrate on mapping a work plan as more and more data is coming to the workgroup. He said that a countywide plan would be his recommendation to give the Board of Commissioners a comprehensive picture before allocating funds, rather than a piece-by-piece proposal approach. Kotas suggested that putting out an RFP without an objective would make it difficult to understand the gaps. Sarro said that the county procurement process requires an RFP for any amount over \$10k. Kotas, Sarro and Dunham discussed the merits of putting out an RFP to gather proposals from providers. Kotas thought we aren't going to go down the path of past years where we don't make decisions. Marsman: how would the RFP aide the commissioners and how long would it take? Sarro: it will help the Commissioners defend any allocation that they decide upon and the RFP could be out in 90 days. Dunham: the focus of this RFP would be those areas that don't have FCC approved speeds. The workgroup discussed the merits of doing an RFP.

Dunham

- Received a proposal from Merit for a survey and data management. Charter will give us street level data, but they won't share with Merit. Recommended that we do an in house survey working with the townships, who has good information about where internet service is lacking.
- Meeting for cities, townships and villages is on March 29 at Allegan Township Hall from 7 to 8:30 p.m. To both present information and gain it from attendees.
- Met with Surf broadband. Current towers can only serve 25M down which is not considered served. Electronics can be upgraded to reach speeds of 100M. Line of site required, so trees are a problem to serving all in range of a tower.

Discussion:

Survey

Discussed whether to do an all-county survey. Salem Township Supervisor Jim Pitsch reported on the earlier efforts to survey in 2015. Suggested contacting Dan Manning of Connect Michigan for the survey data. He said there is always an avenue to serve people. Can fill in later. He described the situation with his daughter living in Leighton Township who is without a service option.

Next Meeting

The committee decided to leave the next meeting for April 7.

Action Items:

Kotas presented the Pullman/Lee Township feasibility study results. Lee Township is digesting the results of its study and is anxious to get started, but would work with anyone who can help make this happen. Said we should be looking at much more than \$10-\$15 million to do the job for Allegan County.

Public Participation: no one wished to

Adjournment: BAW adjourned at 5:50pm.