

Allegan County Broadband Action Work Group

Minutes – July 21, 2020

Meeting was called to order by Chair Austin Marsman @ 4pm

The following members answered the roll call*: Cooper, Armstrong, Kotas, Bursma, Beltman, Siler, Williams and Storey; a quorum was present. *members joined either in person or via zoom. Also present was Project Mgr. Dunham, Rob Sarro and Steve Sedore, county staff.

Presentation: Mercury Broadband representative Rob briefed the BAW on its existing operations. In Kalamazoo market, has 97 towers, 70 of which are complete for its broadband initiative on wireless. Started fiber construction. Was granted \$60 million in ARDOF funding. Decided to move up construction in Grand Rapids market ahead of Kalamazoo market. The G.R. market would include Allegan and intend to start in Clyde Township. Showed map with Allegan County build-out, but expected to be larger as they build the design. In response to Dunham question, said that Allegan County build will start at Grand Junction (Van Buren County) north to Fennville area starting February 1, 2023. Marsman asked whether the company was started as tower-based wireless broadband effort merging into fiber. He also discussed historical operations elsewhere in the country and the state.

No communications.

Minutes of July 7 meeting were approved without objection.

County Administrator Sarro reported county staff is working with local unit requests.

Dunham reported:

- 1,800 survey responses were received from county residents on the status of connection to broadband. The survey window will be kept open. Member Beltman asked whether the AT&T representatives had elaborated on connections in Monterey Township. AT&T said they ran backbone fiber on one section of 130th roadway, but no pedestals.
- Excited with opportunity to receive update from AT&T. Said that county GIS is nearing completion of the mapping with the hope to present it to Board of Commissioners at next meeting.
- Visited with some local units: Saugatuck, Laketown township officials. Had resident from Leighton Township who reached out to ask about extension of Spectrum service.

Resident said it would cost 17,100 to connect. Spectrum rep said company would fund 15,000 of the 17,100 cost.

Action Items: Dunham reviewed highlights of the Request for Proposal: *Broadband Wired Infrastructure Expansion*, noting that responders to RFP would not have to connect to every home, but, rather would have to provide access to its infrastructure. Discussion ensued as to the proposed evaluation criteria. A portion of the proposed RFP asked about legal action requirement. Siler noted that whether a bidder has had legal action may not have “anything to do with their ability to build and provide service.” Urged changing “legal action” to “disciplinary action”. Siler also suggested that examples be provided to bidders to show balance between cost and service. Dunham also discussed RFP section delineating bidding directions. Motion: Moved by Siler, seconded by Williams to approve the RFP and recommend it to the Board of Commissioners. Roll call vote was unanimous of those present. (Storey abstained as measure goes to BOC on which he serves).

Roundtable: Siler and Storey thanked the county staff and project manager for the work developing the RFP. Sarro said the RFP is on the agenda for the afternoon session of the BOC’s July 28 meeting.

Adjournment: Williams, moved and Kotas seconded motion to adjourn. Passed unanimously on voice vote at 4:47pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Jim Storey, Secretary,