

BROADBAND TASK FORCE

August 28, 2019

Committee Members Present: Curt Crandall (Chairman), A. Bigelow, P. Curran, K. Dirlam, M. Evans, D. Fanton, K. Hooker, D. Pullen, R. Zink (Absent: T. Boyde, D. Root)

Others Present: B. Harris, C. Knapp, A. Mann (Win-Win Wireless), D. Martelle, D. McDonnell, N. Pullen (Win-Win Wireless), B. Riehle, M. Washer

Media Present: C. Dutton, *Cuba Patriot*

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 10:05 a.m. by Chairman Crandall

Approval of Minutes

A motion was made by Legislator Fanton, seconded by Legislator Curran, and carried to approve the July 24, 2019, Broadband Task Force minutes.

Maintenance/Service Contract Update

Radio Technician Matt Evans stated the contract update they received is no different than the original support agreement. Mr. Evans indicated the cost is higher because there is more time we have to buy back for the time the microwave radios weren't covered under warranty. Mr. Evans briefly discussed some of the terms of the contract. IT Director Keith Hooker noted that this is just a maintenance agreement. If the County were to get struck by lightning, then the insurance kicks in. County Administrator McDonnell stated that CONXX has indicated that the County has been up and running for three years and no upgrades have been performed, noting that this is something that needs to be brought current. Chairman Crandall stated some of these upgrades would have needed to be done at some point in time, and the cost would have been incurred at that time as well, and he doesn't think it is a lot of extra cost to execute this now versus over a period of time. Ms. McDonnell stated that Mr. Evans was very diligent in calling and getting information and has spent a great deal of time explaining everything to her. Chairman Crandall asked how they proceed with approving this and whether or not it needs to come before the Board. The task force briefly discussed with County Attorney Carissa Knapp a timeline and the appropriate committees this request should be brought to. Attorney Knapp noted that she has not seen the new contract and wants to review it first before any committee members are asked to approve it, and she suggested it be referred to Ways and Means with a resolution going before the Board in October. Mr. Evans noted that his most important concern first is 911 as it is people's lives; so at a minimum, the microwave updates need to be done to keep the system going. Chairman Crandall agreed that priorities lie with 911 and public safety, adding that they need to make sure the Board is aware and understands that these upgrades are not just for the Broadband System. They are needed for the 911 System which happens to go hand-in-hand with Broadband. Chairman Crandall asked if there are other 911 grant funds available they can utilize to offset the cost of this. Mr. Evans stated not at this time as the grants are specific as to what they can spend the money on.

Allegheny County Telecommunications Development Corporation Contract Update

Legislator Curran indicated there has been very little discussed since their last meeting. Mr. Curran stated that they are hopeful the allotment of \$50,000 that ACTDC received from the County this past summer to help the last mile providers put up microcells as well as run their day-to-day functions will be the last. Legislator Curran continued they are in need of three active members to join their board. The charter states they can have between five and nine members, and as of right now they are at 5 because one member hasn't shown up in 18 months. Chairman Crandall asked if they are looking at any upcoming contract changes. Attorney Knapp stated she has not received anything to review; therefore, has no comment. County Administrator McDonnell

asked when the ACTDC contract expires. Legislator Curran stated it is five-year contract, and they are currently in year three. Attorney Knapp noted that the agreement ends at the end of 2021 and will automatically renew for five years.

Chairman Crandall asked if there are any more customers coming on board. Legislator Curran stated slowly but steadily, adding that Win-Win Wireless has been the only active last mile provider. TelStar started out strong and got up to 20 customers, but has since experienced some family matters and hasn't been back in the County. David Pullen from Win-Win Wireless stated they have gone from 20 customers to 70 this year. It is slower than they had hoped; however, part of that was due to some of the microcells. Mr. Pullen continued that they have five separate microcells that have been put up, and three more that they hope to have on in the next month. Mr. Pullen went on to say that if there are sites they can identify and have ACTDC build the microcell, it would save Win-Win Wireless from having to layout the capital for that. Mr. Pullen discussed again TV White Space that they made available over the summer on Rushford Lake.

Grant Funding Update

Mr. Pullen stated that the biggest issue is what happens with the Armstrong project. Mr. Pullen indicated that he has had numerous people ask him what Win-Win Wireless is going to do because Armstrong is going to cover the entire County. Mr. Pullen continued that if you look at Armstrong's grant, there are a lot of census parcels they did not apply for, as he believes they found them too challenging. Those leftover parcels have now been designated by the state to HughesNet; however, HughesNet service is not broadband. Mr. Pullen went on to say that he has been in contact with Tom Johnsen in Minnesota who described a program to Mr. Pullen called "ReConnect" which is a rural development program, and there are some funds available on a national basis. Mr. Pullen discussed the different levels of funding; however, after looking further into the programs rural development map, it appears no site in New York State qualifies. Mr. Pullen indicated that if they were to apply for the program, they have to be able to serve every resident and business in the proposed territory. Mr. Zink indicated that he is unsure if the USDA has the same definition of broadband, and if they don't, there isn't going to be any area that would qualify.

County Administrator McDonnell stated that they had a really good conversation with Senator Gillibrand's staff where they explained the challenges we've had in the County over the last three to five years getting broadband up and running. Ms. McDonnell indicated that Senator Gillibrand's office sent out an announcement that there would be additional funds coming for broadband. Mr. Zink stated that he believes there are no new funds. What Ms. McDonnell is referring to is just a re-release of the 2017 agreement, and they are finally cutting the check.

Ms. McDonnell thanked Mr. Zink for meeting with her and helping her to understand all that is involved with broadband. Ms. McDonnell continued that CONXX is going to a conference in October to talk with vendors who produce TV White Space equipment, and they have recommended that the County wait a little bit to see what the market is going to do. The task force briefly discussed TV White Space and the different avenues they can take to get there. Mr. Zink suggested it should be ACTDC driving this if they are the ones who are going to bring broadband into the County. Chairman Crandall stated when this was put together they were looking at County-wide coverage, but the game changer was Armstrong coming in and taking out larger segments of potential customers, so they now have to look for the need within those holes that Armstrong isn't covering. The committee also discussed working hand-in-hand with the last mile providers to move this project forward. Ms. McDonnell noted that it would behoove them to have an action plan in place so if funding does become available they are ready.

Incident Protocol

Ms. McDonnell stated that she met with Planning Director Kier Dirlam and Radio Technician Matt Evans to discuss what happens when they get a call that the system is down, and when a call goes to 911, ACTDC, etc. Ms. McDonnell continued that they are trying to work on protocols so when the system goes down, the right people are contacted. Ms. McDonnell indicated that when CONXX is up and running, the response time between them and the County will be quicker, and they will then establish when to call ACTDC and/or 911. Mr. Zink asked who answers the phone on behalf of ACTDC. Legislator Curran stated there are two individuals available; however, chances are the last mile providers are going to know there is a problem first because they will be receiving calls from their customers. Mr. Dirlam noted that there has to be someone who is actually going to answer the phone on behalf of ACTDC.

Next Meeting

The next Broadband meeting will be held on Wednesday, October 30, at 10:00 a.m. in the Legislative Chambers.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 11:27 a.m. on a motion made by Mr. Dirlam, seconded by Legislator Curran, and carried.