

Telecommunications Committee Meeting – August 7, 2017

Posted July 31, 2017 at 4 p.m. at the Town of Russell Garage, Town Clerk's Office and Town website. Notices sent via e-mail to the Ashland Daily Press.

The meeting was called to order by Town of Russell Committee Chairman Mark Bugher, Town of Russell Supervisor at 8:00 a.m. at the Town of Russell Garage. Roll call was taken as follows; present Town of Russell Supervisor Larry Meierotto, Town of Russell committee member Mike Cariveau, Town of Bayfield Chairman Tom Gordon, Theron Rutna, Red Cliff Tribe, David Eades, Bayfield Chamber and Visitor Bureau, and Town of Russell Clerk/Treasurer David L. Good. Ron Hauptert, Town of Bayfield, Scottie Sandstrom, Bayfield County Economic Development Corporation, and Gordon Ringberg Mayor of the City of Bayfield were excused.

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited by those present.

Approval of the agenda – A motion was made by Meierotto and seconded by Cariveau to approve the agenda as presented. The motion carried.

PUBLIC INPUT – One member of the public was present. Public input was scheduled for the end of the meeting.

Approval of the minutes – A motion was made by Meierotto and seconded by Cariveau to approve the minutes of the July 6, 2017 and July 19, 2017 meetings of the committee. The motion carried.

NEW BUSINESS

Discussion regarding CenturyLink position on telecommunications plans for Town of Russell and the Bayfield Peninsula – Bugher stated the representative from CenturyLink was not able to attend the meeting. We will continue to invite them to future meetings.

Update of status of WI PSC Broadband Grant application – Bugher reported the Town was not successful in securing a grant. The letter from CenturyLink to the WI PSC opposing various requests including the Town of Russell, Red Cliff Tribe and Bayfield County was distributed and reviewed. We believe there will be another opportunity for grant funding once the State Budget is adopted. Cariveau commented on the rating of the 54 projects submitted by the review committee. Apparently the top ranked projects did not match the list of projects funded. The Russell project was ranked 44th out of the 54 total projects. Discussion followed about why we had this ranking. It may have been the costs per served resident being higher than the other proposals. The committee will use this information to improve our rankings to make another grant request. Efforts to collaborate our filings in the next round with Red Cliff and the Town of Bayfield was discussed. An option of phasing our deployment was also discussed. The committee agreed that we need to develop our strategy for the next grant funding cycle. Rutna believes providing updated information to the FCC for the CAF2 mapping may be a considerable help to us. Discussion followed. Gordon expressed concerns about the letter from CenturyLink not in support of our projects and how much weight the WI PSC gave to those comments from CenturyLink. Gordon also felt the high cost of providing services should not be a factor since these areas are not being served by existing providers because of the high costs. Bugher agreed to follow-up with Dickison regarding the selection process and what we can do to improve our grant success. The committee discussed downsizing the grant request verses the current scope. A pilot

of placing a tower at the Town Garage and providing service as a demonstration project was discussed that we fund through another mechanism.

OLD BUSINESS

Report from Town of Russell on current activities regarding cellular and broadband initiatives – Nothing additional to report.

Report from Red Cliff Tribe on current activities regarding cellular and broadband initiatives – Nothing additional to report.

Report from Town of Bayfield on current activities regarding cellular and broadband initiatives – Gordon stated they have not heard anything further regarding the Happy Hollow project by CenturyLink. Hauptert did have some unofficial communication that CenturyLink may be doing more than they originally planned for Happy Hollow and the Settlement. Bugher stated Mark Scribner stated they are working to serve as many residences in the Town they can but the design work is not done. The marking of existing CenturyLink facilities was discussed. It appears they may be mapping and inventorying their existing lines and facilities. Discussion followed about the conflicting information we seem to be getting from various CenturyLink contacts.

Report from City of Bayfield on current activities regarding cellular and broadband initiatives – No report.

Report by Bayfield Chamber & Visitors Bureau on current activities regarding cellular and broadband initiatives – Eades discussed the periods of high demand when service is blocked/overloaded. They have experienced 3 weekends of system overload. Discussion followed about the new trend to get not only your e-mail and internet via cellphone and/or broadband but also your music and entertainment which includes TV. Visitors provide this feedback to the Chamber Office. Our two cellphone providers, AT&T and Verizon, are providing different levels of service, AT&T is upgrading systems and are now providing better service than Verizon.

Report by Bayfield County Economic Development on current activities regarding cellular and broadband initiatives – Eades reported that Bayfield County is planning to announce that they are branding the County as the “Telecommuting Capital of Wisconsin”. Concerns were expressed about making this claim. Cariveau will be presenting to the BCED Committee at 10 a.m. today. Some of the other committee members were planning to attend this meeting.

Items for next meeting –

Future initiatives of the Committee and meeting frequency – It was agreed to meet September 11, 2017 at 8 a.m. at the Town of Russell Garage. An earlier meeting may be called if the State Budget is passed and another Grant cycle is announced.

Public input – Hal Watkins, 33480 Little Sand Bay Road, spoke about this lack of service and denial of service for internet by CenturyLink. He uses Excede Satellite Service which has usage limits and high costs. The Town survey on cellular and broadband was discussed. The Town of Bayfield is doing the same survey for their permanent, voting, residents. Gordon proposed a funding option for

broadband service by adding a special levy to the tax roll such as .25 mill for several years. Watkins discussed Crane Lake cellular telephone services. He also asked if Duffy can help us with this. His greatest concern for having service is “public safety”. This is number one in his book. The option of providers providing temporary towers and service was discussed briefly. Documented cases of public safety incidents with lack of communications was discussed.

A motion to adjourn at 8:52 a.m. was made by Meierotto and seconded by Cariveau. The motion carried.

The minutes respectfully submitted by:

David L. Good – Clerk/Treasurer