

PUBLIC UTILITY SERVICES COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Zoom Meeting May 11, 2020 1:00 P.M.

Supervisor	Present	Absent	Late	Time In
Shwartz	X			
Jones	X			
DiVeronica	X			
Magliocca	X			
Lawrence		X		

PRESENT:

Committee: **Eve Ann Shwartz**, Dave Jones, Rocco DiVeronica, and Joe Magliocca.

Absent: Fred Lawrence

County Staff: Christine Coe, Scott Ingmire, Melissa Martel Felton, Kipp Hicks, Paul Lutwak, and Gwen Williamson

Additional Present: Andy Lukasiewicz – ECC Technologies

Meeting called to order at 1:04 P.M. by Shwartz.

MINUTES: The Committee unanimously approved the Feb 20 2020 meeting minutes on a **MOTION** by Jones and seconded by Magliocca at 1:05 P.M. 4/0/0

The meeting started with a big thank you to those involved in preparing and submitting the application for the RECONNECT Grant. Shwartz thanked the team, Andy, ECC, Mike Ellis, Samantha Field and everyone on behalf of Mark Scimone, the Committee and the County. She stated that they all had done “an amazing job”. She quoted Mark as saying that he had never worked with a better consultant group. Andy stated that he had never worked with a more cooperative and responsive group either.

Andy shared a Power Point summary and review of the Reconnect Grant Update.

The first slide broke down the specifics on the overall strategy including:

- Identifying 26 Proposed Funded Service Areas (PFSA) and defining 8 Non-Funded Service Areas (NFSA)
- Breakdown of Network (314 total fiber miles), and Project Cost (\$17,655,605.00)
- Public / Private Partnership with Empire summary;
 - * Empire to own laterals, drops and CPE while maintaining network, equipment, CPE, take and process orders, invoices and customer support.
 - * Madison County to own the backbone, laterals, drops and CPE supporting PFSA’s and networking equipment while utilizing fiber network in exchange for maintaining and service customers and revenue share (TBD upon grand awards)

Andy showed a map indicating the proposed backbone, laterals and PFSA areas, as well as a spreadsheet breakdown of required funding and funding sources.

The next slide focused on timing. The grant application was successfully submitted on April 14, 2020. The Public Notice filing stage runs from April 23 through June 7, 2020. There are 5 applications pending for NYS. Following the public notice filing stage there will be an evaluation of applications with potential awards being announced by the end of 3rd or possibly the 4th quarter of 2020.

The last slide shared ideas for how to bolster the application: first by leveraging political support from Senators Gillibrand and Schumer as well as Congressman Brindisi, and second by showing commitment by starting the design phase. There was much discussion regarding both of these options. It was decided to proceed with the letters leveraging political support. It was also decided to hold off on the design phase decision for now because of the difficult financially stressful climate and repercussions resulting from the current CoVid 19 upheaval, at least until we have “found our footing” as a County or when we know if the grant is being awarded to us.

There was discussion about some municipalities noticing that Spectrum is doing work in certain areas and how that may or may not have any impact on the grant status. Andy will keep the Committee informed of any developments.

The previous slide also listed two other possible funding sources: first is private investment (as a last resort) and second is the recently announced option of Rural Digital Opportunity Fund (RDOF). RDOF is a federal funding opportunity targeted for carriers and cooperatives already providing broadband. It has two phases and uses a reverse auction format. The county would need to partner with a carrier who would take the lead as primary and MC would be secondary. Application for this funding would be due in July. The County would need to identify specific areas the RDOF would apply to. Shwartz posed the idea that MC might consider asking ECC

to accomplish this task in the future but for now, Andy agreed to look into two things: 1) to reach out to the USDA to determine if the RDOF option would pose a conflict with the RECONNECT grant or if the two would fit together, and 2) if Empire would have any interest in being the primary carrier if we decide to move forward with the RDOF option.

Scott Ingmire mentioned the US Economic Development Administration CARES Act funding of 1.5 billion dollars related to COVID 19 to be awarded, and that broadband was one of the areas referenced in the material. It was noted that this is federal money and may not be an option because of the grant. Scott will forward this information to Andy.

Melissa Martel Felton received an update from Sebastian Piedmont of Costello (the legal firm representing many municipalities in MC) regarding work being done on favorable contract agreements with Spectrum, but nothing has yet been finalized.

Kipp signed out of meeting.
Andy signed out of meeting.

The Committee entered into executive session for contract negotiations on a **MOTION** by Jones and seconded by DiVeronica at 1:48 P.M. 4/0/0

The Committee came out of executive session on a **MOTION** by Magliocca and seconded by DiVeronica at 1:56 P.M. 4/0/0

There was no new business.

The next scheduled MCPLUS Committee meeting will be June 18, 2020 at 1:00 P.M., location to be confirmed (tentatively planned as a Zoom format meeting).

The meeting was adjourned on a **MOTION** by Jones and seconded by Magliocca at 1:59 P.M.

Respectfully submitted: Gwen Williamson