



Kewaunee County
BROADBAND STUDY COMMITTEE

September 25, 2019 4:30 p.m.

Kewaunee County Administration Center, 810 Lincoln Street, Kewaunee, WI 54216
Human Services Training Room

Call to Order: Chair Weidner called the meeting to order at 4:30 p.m.

Roll Call: Members Present – Robert Weidner, Gary Paape, Tom Cretney, Mary Ellen Dobbins, Virginia Haske, Lee Luft, Tom Romdenne, Scott Feldt, Steve Hanson, Ross Loining, Richard Baker, Ryan Hoffman, Kim Larson, Frank Mazdarevic, Jason Melotte, August Neverman, Steve Schneider (Bug Tussel).

Approval of September, 2019 Agenda: Neverman moved and Paape seconded to approve the agenda. Motion carried.

Approval of August 28, 2019 Minutes: Neverman moved and Paape seconded to approve the August 28, 2019 minutes. Motion carried.

Update on Broadband Expansion Grant Status: Feldt provided an update regarding the broadband expansion grant project with Door County Broadband (DCB). A tower location site has been chosen in the Town of Lincoln on Spruce Road. The tower is likely place erected this year. Discussion followed as to how the location was selected and the contribution by DCB. Feldt indicated that the tower location fits best into DCB plans for providing service to Kewaunee County. Feldt also informed the members that a new round of broadband expansion grants has been announced with \$24 million available and an application deadline of December 15, 2019. General discussion followed as to the grant and the County submitting an application.

Discussion of the Nobles County, MN Feasibility Study: Feldt reviewed his request of members to review the feasibility study. Weidner asked Feldt of his takeaways from the study. Feldt responded that Nobles County is similar in population and the fixed wireless solution was projected at \$6.5 million. Therefore, a similar project could be feasible for Kewaunee County. General discussion followed as to the feasibility study. There was much discussion about grant funding. Neverman stated that the County will need to invest its own money into a project. Grant money will be available but often that is received as a reimbursement for work completed. The County will likely see a return similar to what Brown County has experienced. Investment in broadband is needed for the long-term viability of the County. More discussion followed regarding the risk of going forward with a project that becomes obsolete just a few years later,

Discussion of Provider Presentations: Chair Weidner asked Schneider to introduce himself and give some background. Schneider introduced himself as the CEO of Bug Tussel Wireless. Bug Tussel is a company providing fixed wireless internet services to predominantly rural areas in Wisconsin. Bug Tussel owns 279 towers and has projects in 22 counties. They are familiar with the grant application process. Schneider provided his view on rural broadband and the need for connectivity for rural areas. Schneider summed up his views of rural development by saying "having connectivity does not guarantee there will be success, but not having connectivity guarantees there will NOT be success." Members asked Schneider questions of some of the



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counties Bug Tussel works with and various projects. Schneider answered and gave an example that Iowa County is investing \$3 million into broadband for its rural areas. Also, there was discussion about funding of the project, grant funding and the timeline to implement and fund such a project. What options are available to Kewaunee County.

It was questioned whether moving forward with the study only further delays the County taking action. A number of members agreed that conducting the study, while providing some important information, would delay the County taking action even further. The discussion came down to whether we pick the provider first or do we conduct the study first. The general consensus was to work with a provider as the provider should have most of the information needed to bring forward a proposal. Schneider stated that counties often move forward in one of two ways. The county requests companies to come in and make presentations as to what services they can provide, or the county is approached by a company and the county elects to move forward with them. More discussion followed.

Approve Recommendation for Broadband Feasibility Study: Discussion took place as to whether the Committee should recommend conducting a feasibility study or to move forward with discussions with internet service providers. As discussed earlier, the group agreed to elect to meet with internet providers to see what services they offer and their proposals to provide internet connectivity to Kewaunee County. This would save time and effort. Discussion also took place as to the possibility of hiring a consultant to assist with the proposal review process. Further discussion took place on request for proposal materials and a rating matrix for scoring the various proposals.

Such Other Matters as Authorized by Law: Dobbins emphasized the importance of educating the public as to the process and what the impacts may be of the various proposals. It was agreed an educational component should be pursued.

Next Meeting: The next meeting is tentatively scheduled for Friday, October 25, 2019 at 1:00 p.m. to have internet providers come and discuss possible proposals.

Adjournment: Paape moved and Neverman seconded to adjourn. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 6:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Scott Feldt