

**JEFFERSON COUNTY BOARD
COMMITTEE MINUTES**

October 20, 2023

Broadband Working Group

1. Call to Order

Meeting was called to order by Fitzgerald at 2:00 p.m.

2. Roll Call

Broadband Working Group Members present: Joan Fitzgerald, Jeff Johns, Richard Jones, Robert Preuss, Amy Rinard

Others Present: Ben Wehmeier, County Administrator; Brian Udovich, Highway Operations Manager

Absent: Matthew Foelker

Others Present via ZOOM: Jason Hafenstein; Michael Luckey, Assistant to the County Administrator; Curtis Backlund,

3. Certification of compliance with Open Meeting Law Requirements

Wehmeier certified compliance with the Open Meetings Law

4. Communications

None

5. Public Comment

None

6. Approval of the July 27, 2023 Broadband Working Group minutes

Draft minutes were provided for review.

Motion by Johns/Backlund to approve the July 27, 2023 Broadband Working Group minutes as printed. Motion passed 6-0.

7. Approval of the agenda

No changes.

8. Discussion and possible action related to planning activities under the Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Planning Grants

Handouts were provided for review. Luckey talked about the BEAD process. The county will not need to take any action until spring. He talked about a survey that UW Extension is conducting regarding the amount people are willing to pay for the internet. Wehmeier shared different layers of the PSC maps. The deadline to apply for the grants is November 7th. The state has finished their speed test data collection. Wehmeier explained the financing options for the committee to consider.

9. Update on Regional Broadband Conference

Handouts related to Internet Adoption and the BEAD program were provided for review. Luckey gave an update on the Regional Broadband Conference. UWX has been hosting Virtual Broadband Workshops and in-person conferences. He explained the new definitions of unserved and underserved and the opportunity for direct and community challenges once the PSC finalizes their map. No action taken.

10. Discussion on new Internet Service Providers

Luckey provided an update on new Internet Service Providers that he had conversations with. He has follow-up meetings set up to discuss Jefferson County with them further. No action taken.

11. Update on Broadband Projects

Wehmeier showed broadband project maps from Bug Tussell. Udovich is working with Charter on their projects. Wehmeier showed a map of the areas that Charter is working in. No action taken.

12. Discussion and possible action related to American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Funding and Broadband

Wehmeier said there is \$1M of ARPA funds committed to broadband. \$250,000 of that is obligated for the b PSC grant. Wehmeier talked about the Hwy D Bridge Project (2024) and Phase III of the Interurban Trail (2025) which are eligible for ARPA funds. The Finance Committee discussed reallocating those funds for those projects and fund potential broadband projects with conduit debt financing. Fitzgerald supports reallocating the ARPA funds to other projects.

Motion by Johns/Rinard to authorize Wehmeier to talk to Bugg Tussell about the Capital Funding Grant and funding utilization of conduit debt with potential match and possible action to the County Board. Motion passed 6-0.

Motion by Backlund/Johns to release the \$750,000 of ARPA funds previously committed for broadband projects back to the Finance Committee to be used as appropriate. Motion passed 6-0.

13. Discuss vision, goals, priorities and planning

Wehmeier said they are working on understanding all the new maps and rules. No action taken.

14. Discussion of next steps

No action taken.

15. Discussion and possible action on future meeting dates and agenda items

The Broadband Working Group will meet again as needed. No action taken.

16. Adjourn

Motion by Johns/Preuss to adjourn at 3:36 p.m. Motion passed 6-0.