

MINUTES
MIFFLIN COUNTY INTERNET ADVISORY COMMITTEE
JANUARY 17, 2018
MIFFLIN COUNTY COURTHOUSE, MEETING ROOM B – 3:30 P.M.

ATTENDANCE:

MEMBERS:

Clint Aurand, Armagh Township
Craig Bubb, MABL
John Rhone, Wayne Township
Kristen Ritchey, Comcast via teleconference
Kay Semler, Mifflin County Planning Commission
Michael Tate, GME

OTHERS:

Chastity Fultz, Mifflin County Planning and Development
Bill Gomes, Mifflin County Planning and Development
Brad Kerstetter, Juniata County Planning
Scott Kramer, SEDA-COG via teleconference
Jeremy Smith, Century Link
Lori Comp, Senator Corman's Office
Lauren Kershner, The Sentinel

Call to Order: Bill Gomes called the meeting to order at 3:35 p.m. and reminded everyone to sign the attendance sheet.

Approval of Minutes: Clint Aurand motioned to approve the October meeting minutes. Mike Tate seconded the motion. All members voted aye.

School District Survey: Doug Cunningham was not able to attend the meeting, but did share via email that the survey was posted on the school's website under Family Access. No notification was sent, however. Juniata County is asking for guidance with a cover letter so they can send the survey to their student's families. Chastity Fultz shared that she found the survey from Mifflin County by logging onto Family Access through a desktop computer. She was concerned because notifications were not sent so parents may not know this survey is available and it is also not available on the Skyward app (the school district's app). Clint Aurand will ask for a Skylert (the school district's messaging system) message to be sent to parents so that they will be aware of the survey. He will also ask if a cover letter can be sent as well and if the survey can be placed on the Skyward app. The survey was to be completed by January 28th, but since notification was not sent, the committee recommended that there be a time extension. The survey is also available for each student in the district, allowing the survey to be completed multiple times for the same household.

Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) Application Update: Scott Kramer of SEDA-COG shared that ARC did not extend an invitation to apply for the regular ARC grant funds. Instead, ARC wants us to apply for the ARC Power Grant. This money is given to areas affected by the coal industry. Even though Mifflin and Juniata Counties have not been affected by coal, the application is regional and other

counties involved with the grant (Lycoming and Northumberland) have been affected by coal. The RFP for the Power Grant will be sent as an invitation on January 29th with a 60-90 day window to submit applications. More money is available in this pool. SEDA-COG wants to prepare an implementation grant application where an assessment has been made and then fiber can be placed in the ground. They would like to bring in local carriers for input and to assist in covering some of the match involved. There are two cycles in the Power Grant, one in the spring and the other in late summer. A better time table is not available.

Web Page: Nate Smitchko of Mifflin County MIS and C. J. Bobeck of GME Communications are continuing to work on the website. The first question on the website will be, "Have you contacted your provider?" You cannot continue if you do not say yes. The requests will be sent to the general planning department email. The website could be up and running by the end of the week.

FCC Ruling on CAF II Petition: Bill shared a memo from Joe Witmer regarding a pending denial of the PUC CAF II Petition. These funds were not previously accepted by Verizon and went up for auction. Jeremy Smith of Century Link has not heard whether a municipality can bid on these funds. The funds are based on census blocks where certain addresses are required to be served whether it is economical or not. There were 15-20 census blocks in Mifflin County that would have qualified for these funds. Scott Kramer shared that an electric cooperative in northern Pennsylvania has created an ISP (Internet Service Provider) and is using these funds. Kristen Ritchey of Comcast will research this and see if she can find any further information.

Other Business: Bill contacted Luanne Eckenrode of Valley Rural Electric to determine their position on the potential use of their poles if we were able to find a way to finance the fiber lines. She responded that Valley Rural Electric could provide information about their pole attachments guidelines and fee structures. She was also reminded that their right-of-way easements would not cover fiber optic cable for telecom use and that separate agreements would have to be acquired from consumers. She continued by stating that fiber optic installation does not make business sense for the cooperative at this time.

Craig Bubb spoke to his board about adding conduit to water lines. The Municipal Authority of the Borough of Lewistown Board, engineer and solicitor felt it was a terrible idea to place a conduit for fiber line and share a ditch due to liability issues. However, they do have a lot of old abandon lines that are intact and not in use by the water authority that the board is willing to allow someone to install conduit and fiber. It is not clear if they still have rights to the pipes since they abandoned them. The abandoned pipes are located in the public right-of-way and are capped. Craig will work with GIS to map the locations of the abandoned lines. Mike Tate asked Craig to include an option in their next grant application that they can provide for future broadband expansion by widening the ditch to allow for placement of conduit. Craig will follow up on this and noted that the next grant application is due February 28th. They could add a disclosure statement that with a successful award of the grant, they could create an avenue for future broadband expansion. Grants are typically an 85/15 split and the conduit could possibly be leased to a provider to help pay for the match.

John Rhone suggested checking with electric companies who are upgrading overhead protective ground wire for long haul. The fiber pull is every two miles, which could allow for broadband expansion across multiple counties. There may be extra space in the existing fiber lines that could be leased. If electric companies know that they could rent this space, they may install larger fiber as they replace lines.

Verizon, Century Link, Nittany Media and Atlantic Broadband Follow-up: No updates were available from any of the providers in attendance. The Planning Department received notice of an issue in the Kansas area in Oliver Township that has been passed along to Nittany Media.

House Bill 1620: Lori Comp spoke with Senator Corman about House Bill 1620, which was discussed at the previous meeting. Senator Corman would not commit to support of this bill without researching the bill, but noted that many municipalities are not in favor of the bill. As for the question Bill requested in a memo to Lori to share with Senator Corman's senior staff on broadband legislation, he is supportive of helping in any way as long as it is done right. He will write letters of support as long as he can see the language.

Next Meeting: The 2018 meeting dates will be the third Wednesday. The committee will not meet in November due to the Thanksgiving holiday. The next meeting will be held Wednesday, February 21st.

Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 4:30 p.m.