

MINUTES
MIFFLIN COUNTY INTERNET ADVISORY COMMITTEE
BROADBAND EXPANSION KICK OFF CONFERENCE CALL
DECEMBER 18, 2018
MIFFLIN COUNTY COURTHOUSE, MEETING ROOM B – 3:00 P.M.

ATTENDANCE:

Clint Aurand, Armagh Township via teleconference
Craig Bubb, MABL
Doug Cunningham, Mifflin County School District
Chastity Fultz, Mifflin County Planning and Development Office
Bill Gomes, Mifflin County Planning and Development Office
Phil Lucas, Mifflin County 911
Kristen Ritchey, Comcast via teleconference
Mike Tate, GME Communications via teleconference
Eric Welty, Noovis via teleconference
Robert Postal, Mifflin County Commissioner
Gene Wolfkill, Geisinger via teleconference

DISCUSSION:

Eric Welty of Noovis thanked everyone for participating and provided an overview of the schedule and noted that we were already a little ahead of schedule. The next Internet Advisory Committee will be held January 16th at which time Eric will provide an update and answer any questions.

Eric went on to explain that a conference call was held on Monday, December 17th with Bill Gomes, Chastity Fultz and Laura Simonetti from GIS to review the initial data collection request. The request was broken down into six different buckets of information. Noovis will put the pieces of information together in order to find ideal areas to build pilot projects. Eric recognized the fact that the County does not want to own anything and will look at funding sources for the county to possibly form a cooperative if it possible. Other options may also be available.

Eric stated that there is a lot of good information and backup work already completed that has put us ahead of most others they work with. He then reviewed information needed including data collection and identification. Bill is working on gathering information on franchise agreements from the municipalities. Eric would like to identify any broadband initiatives that have been taken previously. Bill has obtained some information on the E-Rate program and the Next Generation 911. If Eric needs more information on E-Rate, he will contact Doug Cunningham. Gene Wolfkill was not sure what the Healthcare Connect Fund entailed, but his interpretation would be showing linkage to buildings and not necessarily helpful for residents. Eric will do more research on this area. Some of these initiatives may help commercial areas, but may pass by residential areas. Phil Lucas mentioned that at least one provider has expressed interest in the new 911 tower in New Lancaster Valley.

Information has recently been provided on the ReConnect initiative, which is the USDA program we have been anticipating. Eric will have his team join the webinar on this new program, which will be held December 20th. Bill has also learned that Mark Smith is no longer working with the governor's office on the PA broadband initiative and is very concerned as to what this will do to the program. The timelines for the

ReConnect program are April 29th and May 29th depending on the program pursued. At this time, however, he is not sure the USDA program is the way to go.

Eric is also looking to focus on where the majority of residential and commercial development is located. A land use map from the County comprehensive plan in 2014 was provided and the GIS department is also providing much of this information. Bill contacted MCIDC and they are not aware of any new major commercial development in the area since First Quality. Primary Health Network did just relocate to Derry Township and a senior daycare center is located in their building. Eric will also need a list of community anchor institutions, such as schools, libraries, hospitals, police stations, etc.

Most important to Eric is any known priority areas for expansion. He would like to know what areas the complaints are coming from so that he can focus on those areas or any other known areas of inadequate service. He will test areas and look at pricing and let the committee know if it makes sense to have the area be a pilot. Bill initially suggested Armagh and Wayne Townships as possible areas to explore.

The contract award and kick off call are ahead of schedule. Noovis plans to spend most of January and February in data collection. Eric told the committee to feel free to pass any information along, even if it is after this timeframe. Eric will develop pilot locations by March and have a report available in April.

Commissioner Postal would like Bill to reserve time at each committee meeting to provide updates from Eric. Eric prefers to over communicate, even if it is only to say that things are on track.

Eric will provide pricing on any design suggested, but does know that Comcast and others will have their own opinions. When he prices designs, his costs do align with reality. Kristen Ritchey of Comcast mentioned that even though there are a fair number of government programs available, Comcast is either not eligible or they choose not to participate because of the number of constraints associated with them.

Eric requested contact information for Verizon. He is willing to speak to them to try to get them to work with the county. Bill added that Atlantic Broadband just upgraded their internet service a year ago and has indicated they do not intend to expand further. The call ended at 3:22 p.m.