



**CHAMPAIGN COUNTY BOARD
BROADBAND TASK FORCE AGENDA**

County of Champaign, Urbana, Illinois
Monday, August 15, 2022 - 4:30 p.m.

Shields-Carter Meeting Room
Brookens Administrative Center
1776 E. Washington St., Urbana

MINUTES – Approved as Distributed on January 29, 2024

Members Present: Stephanie Burnett, M.C. Neal, Mike Smeltzer, Eric Thorsland, and Brad Uken

Members Absent: Samantha Carter, Brad Passalacqua, Kyle Patterson, and Jacob Paul

Others Present: Darlene Kloeppel (County Executive), Tim Arbeiter (Finley Engineering) Mary Ellen Wuellner (Grant Writer), and Mary Ward (Recording Secretary)

Agenda Items

I. Call to Order

Mr. Uken called the meeting to order at 4:45 p.m.

II. Roll Call

Roll call was taken, and a quorum was declared present.

III. Approval of Agenda/Addendum

MOTION by Mr. Thorsland to approve the agenda; seconded by Mr. Neal. Upon voice vote, the **MOTION CARRIED** unanimously.

IV. Approval of Minutes

A. July 11, 2022

MOTION by Mr. Smeltzer to approve the minutes of the July 11, 2022 meeting, seconded by Ms. Burnett. Upon voice vote, the **MOTION CARRIED** unanimously.

V. Public Participation

There was no Public Participation.

VI. Communications

There were no communications.

VII. New Business

A. Result of Interviews

Mr. Uken passed out a handout that explained the RFI process. Mr. Uken went over the document to give background and lead into the interviews that were held. The interview team met and interviewed the five providers that were selected and met several times following the interviews to decide on a draft recommendation.

B. Task Force Recommendation for August 18th Champaign County Board Meeting

The recommendation is as follows:

1. To request additional ARPA resources in the amount of \$7 million from the Board and
2. Request the County Executive to begin negotiations with Volo.net and NextLink to receive a part of the \$3 million ARPA allocation dedicated to broadband to pursue Connect IL grants for fiber-related projects.

Mr. Arbeiter said the interview team did their homework and a lot of inquiry of the providers.

Mr. Thorsland said we should pursue fiber-related grants and other grants besides Connect IL. We also want to pursue other matching funds. There might be funds for broadband in the new federal infrastructure bill. Mr. Arbeiter wanted to clarify that some programs federal programs cannot use local and state ARPA funds at match.

Mr. Uken asked if a formal motion was needed to move this recommendation to the County Board. Ms. Kloeppel answered by saying the County Board will be receiving information to begin looking at the rest of the ARPA funding, which has been received. A decision can be made to put it in this year's budget or next years budget. They are at the point with the ARPA funding where they will have to make choices as to what they want to fund. There is still almost \$3 million left that could be allocated from this year's funding. The only funds that have been taken out have been for Finley. There are a lot of options.

Discussion was held as to what the money would be specifically used for. One would be fiber in the ground. Volo did specify in their proposal that they wanted to work with the Housing Authority and getting connectivity to them. We also need to get it to low-income areas of the county. Both Volo and NextLink are willing to address this. Both companies do have low-income pricing. Matching funds would be the biggest part. Both companies are willing to match what the county puts ins.

Funding was discussed and if we would have enough to get things done. If the RDOF funding that NextLink has applied for comes through, it will be possible. If it doesn't, we'll be short. Too low of a local match we run the risk of not getting funding. It's important the board prioritizes this project. It will be in the County Board's court.

Mr. Thorsland said this is one of the consensus items that was talked about from the beginning. A couple of questions that the Board could ask might include: will it get done if RDOF is approved? What's possibly coming through on the latest infrastructure bill? We have a good case to make to the Board. The budget process is just starting, and the new funds may not be allocated for a while.

Ms. Burnett stated she is pleased with the outcome and asked how they will divide the territory.

That's part of the next step. It will be up to the County Executive to negotiate and work with the companies. All of the providers had stated they were willing to work together. Mr. Smeltzer added that the original Finley maps had some natural splits that would work. Mr. Arbeiter said that this will have to come in stages. We don't overlap or double funding.

MOTION by Mr. Smeltzer and second by Mr. Thorsland to accept the recommendation as presented but taking out the words Connect IL. The recommendation now reads:

1. To request additional ARPA resources in the amount of \$7 million from the Board and
2. Request the County Executive to begin negotiations with Volo.net and NextLink to receive a part of the \$3 million ARPA allocation dedicated to broadband to pursue grants for fiber-related projects.

Upon voice vote, the **MOTION CARRIED** unanimously.

VIII. Other Business

There was no other business.

IX. Chair's Report

There was no Chair's Report.

X. Adjournment

Mr. Uken adjourned the meeting at 5:20 p.m.

Please note the minutes reflect the order of the agenda and may not necessarily reflect the order of business conducted at the meeting.