



**CHAMPAIGN COUNTY BOARD
BROADBAND TASK FORCE AGENDA**

County of Champaign, Urbana, Illinois
Monday, April 18, 2022 - 4:30 p.m.

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

Committee Members:

Stephanie Burnett	Jacob Paul
Samantha Carter – Vice-Chair	Mike Smeltzer
M.C. Neal	Eric Thorsland
Brad Passalacqua	Brad Uken – Chair
Kyle Patterson	

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CHAMPAIGN COUNTY BOARD
BROADBAND TASK FORCE AGENDA
County of Champaign, Urbana, Illinois
Tuesday, April 5, 2022 - 6:30 p.m.
Shields-Carter Meeting Room and Via Zoom
Brookens Administrative Center
1776 E. Washington St., Urbana

MINUTES – Subject to Review and Approval

Members Present: Samantha Burnett (via Zoom), Samantha Carter, M.C. Neal, Kyle Patterson, Mike Smeltzer, Eric Thorsland and Brad Uken

Members Absent: Brad Passalacqua and Jacob Paul

Others Present: Sean Middleton and Doug Dawson with Finley/CCG Consulting, Darlene Kloepfel (County Executive), Mary Ellen Wuellner (Grant Writer) and Mary Ward (Recording Secretary)

Agenda Items

I. Call to Order

Mr. Uken called the meeting to order at 4:35 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 Ms. Carter. Upon voice vote, the **MOTION CARRIED** unanimously.

IV. Approval of Minutes

A. March 21, 2022

MOTION by Mr. Smeltzer to approve the minutes of the March 21, 2022 meeting, seconded by Mr. Neal. Upon voice vote, the **MOTION CARRIED** unanimously.

V. Public Participation

Rick Harnish, Director of Development, NextLink Internet, (aka AMG Technology Investment Group) They were the largest winner in the Connect America fund phase 2 grant from the FCC and were awarded \$281m some of which is for Illinois. In the RDOF funding program they were awarded \$429m. They are a presumptive winner as it has not been authorized yet. They have authorization by the engineering staff at the FCC and are awaiting the commissioner’s approval. They plan to invest another \$400m for a total of \$1 billion investment for the states they were awarded in. They participate in the EBB and ACP programs to help consumers with costs. They have partnered with Eastern Illini Electric Coop (EIEC). They are building 500 miles of fiber to connect all of their substations together. At the substations they will be erecting monopoles to supply wireless broadband and will supply fiber in the future. They will also hold the AMI equipment for EIEC and will install IOT bay station on the towers. They hire locally and train staff and the average salary is \$71.5k including benefits. Have approval to build gigabit service.

Jason Young, Volo Internet & Tech, a local wireless and fiber provider. Wants inclusion of local business in this endeavor. They are active in rural expansion. They have resources and opportunities.

56 Tyler Evans, Director of Business Strategies, Stratus Networks, gave a brief overview of their company.
57 They have their own network in several places in Illinois. They are looking for communities to partner
58 with and to expand. Their plan is to bring fiber to every home at 1 gigabit of speed.
59

60 **VI. Communications**

61
62 There were no communications
63

64 **VII. New Business**

65 A. Strategic Consideration for Bring Broadband to Underserved Areas of Champaign County

- 66 1. Pages 13-20 of the Broadband Plan Report
67 2. Memo – Broadband Project Strategic Considerations
68

69 Doug Dawson with CCG Consulting spoke to the committee about the challenge of going from the
70 document to action. It is a lot of work. He is in favor of a step-by-step approach. The memo in the
71 packet is a great place to start as it lays out a lot of the steps.
72

73 Mr. Smeltzer raised the question of how RDOF may complicate our planning. Mr. Dawson said we
74 need to consider and plan for both scenarios, if RDOF is awarded, and if it's not. It is a complication,
75 and we need to have reasonable discussions to plan for what we want to do.
76

77 Mr. Smeltzer also asked about the percent of total project of county matching funds is a reasonable
78 percentage. Mr. Dawson said it will come down to the cost per passing. If it's \$20,000 per passing
79 they'll want more local match than if it's \$10,000 per passing. A lot will depend on how the State
80 looks at it and hopefully, they'll give a lot of direction.
81

82 The Memo that came from Ms. Kloeppel and Ms. Wuellner are the major points as they saw them.
83 Mr. Dawson thinks it's a great outline.
84

85 There are five major decision points in the outline. Mr. Uken would try to work through this as a
86 whole to begin with and see how it goes. We may have to eventually break some of this down into
87 sub-committees.
88

89 Discussion was held on the first point, what model is most favorable for the County. Mr. Smeltzer
90 stated that he is in favor a public/private partnership. There needs to be one organization that's doing
91 the grant and being sure the whole county is being taken care of. Having a central control on how this
92 is put together makes sense. Mr. Thorsland asked for the pros and cons of a retail system vs. a
93 public/private partnership. The study came up with the retail recommendation since this will mostly
94 be grant funded. It all comes down to funding. RDOF does throw a complication into this decision.
95 We can include this in the RFI to ask the ISPs for their opinion. What's the path to get this done to
96 everyone's satisfaction? It's too early to pick one; we need to get more information to decide.
97

98 Ms. Kloeppel said she is getting requests to sign letters of support for ISPs. Is there risk for doing
99 this? What are the pros and cons? If you don't support some of these, they might be missing out on
100 smaller grants that will help fill an area. Some of the smaller grants could help take care of some
101 areas before the Federal grants arrive. Mr. Uken stated that he wasn't sure we're quite ready to be
102 signing off on these letters of support until we're a little farther along in the process. Mr. Smeltzer
103 wondered if there is a way to incentivize the potential RDOF winner to move from wireless to fiber
104 sooner or skip wireless altogether? Money solves a lot of problems. They might be willing to have
105 that conversation.
106

107 Ms. Carter had a question about the RDOF maps in the report, if we wait to give a letter of support to
108 the ISPs will that money be available later? What is the urgency to do these? RDOF winners have a
109 long timeline, if they are awarded, to complete the project with checkpoints they must meet along the

110 way. Discussion continued as to if it is better to offer a letter of support and possibly have input into
111 what is being done as the letter may help them obtain the grant funding. If there is no letter, they
112 might lose out on the grant. Should letters of support only be written for fiber projects and not
113 wireless?
114

115 Rick Harnish of NextLink joined the discussion to help answer some questions that arose during the
116 discussion. The comment had been made that the RDOF areas look like Swiss cheese with areas not
117 being covered by RDOF. They are obligated to serve the RDOF areas, but wireless doesn't know
118 boundaries and will fill the holes in between the RDOF areas. Appreciates that we see that we can
119 leverage RDOF to get more funding in the Connect IL grants. They are willing to do that, maybe up
120 to 50% possibly. They have talked to the FCC, and where appropriate, they can go back and change
121 their plan from wireless to fiber. Their plan is to move forward with wireless and then go back and
122 build out the fiber network. Phase I is wireless to get people service as quickly as possible and Phase
123 II is fiber. They are in a partnership with Eastern Illini Electric Cooperative, and they are committed
124 to the project.
125

126 For point number one in the Memo, we agree that we have it narrowed down to points A (Retail
127 Model) and C (Public/Private Partnership) are where we're at for now.
128

129 Discussion continued onto the second point about developing either an RFQ or RFI. As part of that,
130 the report would be shared with the providers and they would have a good base of information to put
131 together their plan. Mr. Dawson likes this approach. In another county he is working with they are
132 asking the ISPs for maps for where they plan to serve, what technology they want to use and how
133 much money do they want from the county. In the RFQ, you want to make sure all areas of the
134 county are covered.
135

136 Mr. Thorsland asked if we are ready for an RFQ, or do we really need an RFI?
137

138 Is it realistic to stay within boundaries as written in the study? It would be good to have the data.
139 The data and maps could be included in the RFI. It would be a good place to start.
140

141 There was general consensus that we are in support of doing an RFI using points listed in the Memo
142 and using the maps from the study as a starting point.
143

144 The discussion then moved to point 3 on the Memo to determine a range of options for the County
145 contribution. The ARPA budget was discussed for this year. \$3 million was budgeted for FY2022
146 and the consulting fee came out of that amount. The second ARPA installment has not yet been
147 received but there was an understanding among the board that more funds would be coming for the
148 broadband project, but no amount was discussed. Unofficially, there are discussions of possibly \$10-
149 \$12 million in funds for broadband total, that includes the \$3 million for this fiscal year.
150

151 Mr. Smeltzer discussed and passed out a handout on Bond Funding and RDOF.
152

153 Mr. Smeltzer reminded the committee about the report from the Housing Authority earlier in this
154 process. This study is all about rural Champaign County. The Housing Authority was looking to the
155 County for funding to make broadband happen for their various facilities. It was mentioned that there
156 are other Federal grants that are available specifically for these types of projects. The County may be
157 asked to find some type of funding for these projects. The Housing Authority will be put on the next
158 agenda.
159

160 Mr. Dawson said that we may need a sub-committee to be working on the other in-kind contributions,
161 particularly items like right of ways, fee waivers, etc.
162

163 Ms. Kloeppe brought up the Statistically Valid Survey. She feels that this is something we need to
164 be moving on soon and is checking with RPC to see if they are able to take that on. Mr. Uken asked
165 how we would get a better response with this survey. They would need to do either telephone or a
166 door-to-door survey and we would need to get to 500-800 responses to be valid.

167
168 Mr. Thorsland said they we should allow the Executive to get this started. The committee is in
169 consensus on proceeding with the survey

170
171 RPC has the expertise to do this, Ms. Kloeppe is checking to see if they have the time to do this. If
172 not, we may have to do an RFP to find someone to do this. Mr. Smeltzer suggested one the questions
173 to include with the survey would be if people are willing to cooperate with the use of the right-of-way
174 along their property lines if we need to run fiber. Mr. Uken felt this could be a tricky question to
175 answer as there is a lot of nuances in how that happens but would be good to plant a seed.

176
177 Mr. Dawson said they are willing to help and will get us a proposal of what that might look like for
178 the RFI.

179
180 **VIII. Other Business**

181 A. Date of next meeting

182
183 The date of the next is to be determined. Mr. Uken will work on coordinating the next meeting date
184 to be held in the next 7 to 14 days.

185
186 **IX. Chair's Report**

187
188 There was no Chair's Report.

189
190 **X. Adjournment**

191
192 Mr. Uken adjourned the meeting at 6:20 p.m.

193
194
195 *Please note the minutes reflect the order of the agenda and may not necessarily reflect the order of business*
196 *conducted at the meeting.*



OFFICE OF THE CHAMPAIGN COUNTY EXECUTIVE

1776 East Washington Street, Urbana, Illinois 61802-4581

Darlene A. Kloeppe, County Executive

Memorandum

To: Broadband Task Force Members
From: Bradley Uken, Broadband Task Force Chair
Darlene Kloeppe, County Executive
Date: April 12, 2022
Re: Broadband Project Strategic Considerations - Update

Following submission of CCG/Finley's report to the Broadband Task Force, we have summarized the decision points for the Task Force's recommendations to the full County Board for next steps to build out broadband for Champaign County.

- 1) Determine which model is most favorable for county
 - a. Retail model – single/multiple ISP (current provider)
 - i. Consultants' recommendation
 - ii. Page 157
 - b. Open access
 - i. Local government builds fiber network and makes it available to multiple ISPs
 - ii. Page 158
 - c. Public-private partnership
 - i. Funded by local government, ISP, or financial stake shared between both
 - ii. Page 161
 - d. Some other approach
 - i. Regional collaboration

Currently, we need more information to make a final decision, however the Task Force (TF) has narrowed the recommended model to option A or C.

- 2) **There is support to issue an RFQ (or RFI) for private providers to install, operate, and maintain broadband internet network reaching unserved and underserved premises in Champaign County.**
 - a. **Shall we ask the Executive to draft and issues an RFI?**
 - b. The RFI would address numerous items including the following:
 - i. A map outlining the area the ISP was proposing to serve
 - ii. How would the ISP serve that area, via fiber, wirelessly or a combination of the two?

- iii. Funding, an outline of money the ISP was pledging, dollars they would need through grants and how much they would be seeking from the county in ARPA funds.
 - c. The county would be split into six service districts, Finley has this completed already, page 132. The intent would be that all six districts would be covered in proposals by ISP's. Proposals could and would go over the established lines, thus covering additional partial districts.
- 3) Determine range of options for county contribution
 - a. **The approved budget for the 2022 fiscal year has \$3 million allotted for broadband.** As a note, any consulting expenses will come out of this budget number.
 - b. Discussion for the 2023 budget, though not formally proposed, may set aside another \$7 to \$9 million bringing the total to \$10 to \$12 million.
- 4) Identify task force, staff, volunteers, and/or consultant roles
 - a. Research policy/procedural barriers – county staff in P&Z; other?
 - b. Project oversight – Finley through extension of contract
 - c. Community survey – possibly CCPRC
 - d. Community engagement – possibly CC Farm Bureau
 - e. **Shall we ask the Executive to begin the engagement process with these groups through formal agreements, if necessary, to continue to move forward with the project?**