



**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

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 26, 2022 - 4:30 p.m.
Shields-Carter Meeting Room
Brookens Administrative Center
1776 E. Washington St., Urbana

MINUTES – Subject to Review and Approval

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

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

Others Present: Darlene Kloeppel (County Executive), Mary Alice Wu and Dawn Owens (U of I), 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 4:30 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. Smeltzer. Upon voice vote, the **MOTION CARRIED** unanimously.

IV. Approval of Minutes

A. April 26, 2022

MOTION by Mr. Thorsland to approve the minutes of the April 26, 2022 meeting, seconded by Mr. Smeltzer. 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. Community Survey Results

Maryalice Wu and Dawn Owens, both with CITL at the U of I, gave an overview the Community Survey and how they conducted the project, the results obtained and technical details of the Community Survey. The survey was a statistically valid survey of the County asking how much people supported the idea of the County investing in Broadband and how likely were they to subscribe. Other questions were asked

55 regarding what they liked about their service, what type of service they currently have, how much they're
56 currently paying and what types of things they do over the internet.

57
58 There were four main methods of communicating with people: by mail, canvassing, text blasts and
59 promotion. The County sent out 3,699 postcards each with a unique code. A second mailing went
60 specifically to the rural areas. There was a huge canvassing effort – they were able to contact 2,842
61 different households. Farm Bureau did text blasts to 1,880 members. Various promotions via an
62 interview on Illinois Homepage, various community Facebook postings, Farm Bureau meetings and Farm
63 Bureau email blasts.

64
65 They went over the results of the survey, which can be found at:
66 <https://www.co.champaign.il.us/CountyBoard/Broadband.php>

67
68 Mr. Uken thanked them for all the work they did on the survey.

69
70 Mr. Neal asked how the question on value was worded. For the value question and the quality index
71 question it was grouped by region, would it be possible to get that by ISP? The value question was
72 worded like, please rate the value you get for the price you pay. There will be a more comprehensive
73 report coming that will include the survey questions.

74
75 Mr. Uken asked what challenges they still see with the data? The Regions weren't the same size and out
76 of proportion. 20% of the responses were from farms and had to do weighting. Mr. Uken suggested they
77 may need to explain weighted/unweighted, so it makes sense online.

78
79 Mr. Smeltzer said that one thing is a tiny blip in a great body of work. Thanked them for their work. Ms.
80 Owen asked if there is anything other information needed for the grant writers. Mr. Arbeiter from Finley
81 said that this is a very comprehensive report. Ms. Wu stated that they will also be writing a meta-data
82 report.

83 84 B. Request for Information (RFI) Report

85
86 Tim Arbeiter from Finley started off by saying hats off to the Task Force, County leadership and the
87 survey group for the fine work on the data. A lot of counties don't move as quickly into action as we
88 have done. Their first key recommendation was to get statistical data. This will make an impact on
89 future funding requests.

90
91 The new Federal funding and the State funding that is coming have aligned the definitions of served
92 areas, under-served areas, and unserved. In Illinois there is a fourth definition of highly unserved.
93 Connect Illinois has that fourth level.

94
95 The RFI was published to all existing providers and was published on the county's website. The RFI was
96 sent directly to several providers. He then presented the report which can also be found on the Broadband
97 page on the County's website.

98
99 He went through the respondents including AT&T, Bluebird Network, CCG Fiber / Pavlov Media,
100 Comcast of Illinois, Digital Infrastructure Group (DIG), Frontier Communications, MFWireless, Nextlink
101 Internet, and Volo.net Internet. Any proprietary information has been redacted from the report. The first
102 question was, "Do you have interest in your county to expand broadband?" The answer is, "Yes". We
103 asked the respondents to look at the six sectors and give us a breakdown of which areas of interests they
104 are interested in.

105
106 He went over the RFI Ranking Breakdown and the various tables in that report. He also went over the
107 maps. They show the grant eligible areas and exclude the RDOF areas. The pink areas are eligible for
108 Connect Illinois.

109 Mr. Arbeiter then went over the large rubric which contains all the information from the responding
110 providers on one sheet. Seven of the nine providers have used grant funding previously. Many of them
111 are planning on going after the Connect Illinois funds.
112

113 There is interest; so now, on to the next steps.
114

115 C. Strategic Considerations for Bringing Broadband to Unserved and Underserved Areas of
116 Champaign County

117 D. Task Force Recommendation for July 21 Champaign County Board Meeting
118

119 Mr. Smeltzer asked if the chart could be put in the same order as the report. It would be easier to look at
120 it all at the same time. It looks like there are seven providers that look like they are interested in
121 providing to all areas.
122

123 Mr. Uken asked to clarify the companies that want to do all fiber to the entire county are: Comcast,
124 Frontier, Pavlov and Volo. Mr. Arbeiter said that the ones that said entire county there would probably be
125 some hybrid; Volo was stronger on the fiber standpoint. Comcast said all county as they ranked all of
126 their sector's number one. When you rank all of them number one, it begs the question of the ability to
127 get it all done in the time frame. He would also say that of others. Most wanted to do fiber with hybrid
128 on a few of these.
129

130 Mr. Thorsland felt he needed more time to look at the information. Who's interested in the full area of
131 the county and using fiber and then look at things like speed. If they said they were interested in the
132 whole county and then listed priority areas, does that mean they were interested in doing those areas first?
133 Mr. Arbeiter said there really is no interpretation on that. He will do some more analysis on the fiber vs
134 fixed wireless hybrid combos.
135

136 There is a lot to look at and digest and its great information for the Task Force.
137

138 Mr. Smeltzer asked for Finley's thoughts on putting out an RFP to see if there's a provider willing to do
139 the whole county and not consider any partial. If there is a provider willing to do the whole county, the
140 next step is finding out what are they estimating the total bill to be knowing there's only so much support
141 the county is willing to provide. You would do this with a number of the providers that indicated county
142 wide. He would also encourage those that have bigger swaths or multiple sectors, while it is tempting to
143 go with one provider to do the whole county, you have to ask the competitiveness of the application. It is
144 a large amount of territory to cover. The time is good as Connect Illinois reopens in the fall. Connect
145 Illinois has a 90-day rotation cycle. It could be one provider or multiple proposals from multiple
146 providers. There are nine opportunities, which ones do you want to advance the conversation with?
147

148 Mr. Neal asked what scenario provides the best chance of getting funding? We don't know all the
149 dynamics at this point. Those proposals that have county support, whether that support is through a
150 monetary match, will definitely strengthen the proposals. The State asks for the project area, timeline,
151 milestones and can you meet the timelines. It really comes down to the numbers and what's being asked
152 for. They will look at those with the highest number of points in those areas.
153

154 Would it be better to do interviews, RFPs, or RFQ's to learn providers milestones, timelines, etc.? It
155 would help to do some interviews with those you are interested in advancing forward. They should be
156 able to estimate, from their company perspective, the total bill cost, type of support they are looking for
157 from the county.
158

159 Mr. Uken thinks interviews are the next step and he could give the ones he thinks we should interview
160 along with reasons to interview them and reasons not to do the other four.
161

162 Mr. Thorsland agreed. He is hesitant to do nine companies and go to the state. It would be hard to
163 coordinate. With two to three strong contenders the main question is do you have the manpower and
164 equipment to do the whole county, and can you do it within the timeframe given the amount of money we
165 think we are going to have. If they are hesitant, they may not be a great contender; if they have good
166 answers then they are. He sees a couple of strong contenders and agrees interviews are the way to go. He
167 asked about the timeline and recommending what to the County Board on July 21.
168

169 Mr. Uken talked about timeline. There is a desire to come up with a report or recommendation for the
170 July 21 County Board meeting. We may have until the August board meeting. At that time, we would
171 have to have a final recommendation. We would have to have had the interviews and here is our
172 recommendation.
173

174 Ms. Kloepfel stated that timeline she's been discussing with Brad has to do with the budget that has to be
175 approved. The second ARPA funds have been received. It needs to be allocated and committed by the
176 end of 2024. It also needs to be in the budget otherwise it's not allocated money. It doesn't have to have
177 a specific company picked out at that time but need an amount to be allocated to Broadband.
178

179 Mr. Thorsland doesn't think we can do interviews and have a recommendation by July 21. Mr. Uken
180 thought that Finley would be the one to set up the interviews as they have the contact information, etc.
181 Mr. Smeltzer asked about the procurement process. Ms. Kloepfel said we are not actually purchasing
182 anything, it's a partnership. We are selecting a partner to partner with the County.
183

184 Mr. Uken said the companies he would like to interview include: Comcast, Frontier, Pavlov and Volo
185 and the fifth one is NextLink. His reasons are they want to do the entire county and the first four want to
186 do fiber. And NextLink, while they are hybrid, they are proposing to cover the entire county. The other
187 four; MFWireless does not meet the speed test, AT&T and Bluebird are fiber but only part of the county
188 and DIG didn't follow directions.
189

190 Mr. Thorsland agreed. He excluded the same four and has a high degree of interest in the five. Mr.
191 Smeltzer also felt that those were the right five to interview. It makes sense to leave NextLink on the list
192 as they are the RDOF winner and have shown they are willing to invest money in Champaign County.
193 Mr. Patterson added that it makes sense to narrow the list down and do interviews. Mr. Neal said he
194 agreed with the first four on the list. He did not have NextLink on his list, but he has no problem adding
195 them.
196

197 Ms. Kloepfel felt interviews would be a good next step. Do we want the whole committee to interview or
198 use a sub-committee?
199

200 Mr. Arbeiter agrees interviews should be next and can get to next level questions. Interviews are part of
201 the process and part of the agreement of the county. They can also help come up with the questions.
202

203 Mr. Thorsland asked about the process for the interviews.
204

205 We need to give the providers some time to prepare and if we know the questions in advance, we could
206 send those to them.
207

208 Ms. Kloepfel said the group could decide questions as a whole and a sub-committee could do the
209 interviews. The interviews could be more confidential. The sub-committee would report back to the
210 Task Force. The final selection would need to be at a public meeting. The sub-committee would need to
211 be a committee of two task force members and could include MaryEllen and/or Tim. These could also be
212 done on Zoom.
213

214 Mr. Thorsland nominated Mr. Smeltzer as he always has great questions and Mr. Uken as the chair or Mr.
215 Neal has the technology background. Mr. Patterson agreed.

216
217 The consensus is to do interviews with Comcast, Frontier, Pavlov, Volo and NextLink. The sub-
218 committee will consist of Mike Smeltzer, Brad Uken, Tim or Sean from Finley and someone from the
219 Executive's Office.

220
221 Interviews will be the next step. Discussion then centered on the questions that will be asked. Mr.
222 Thorsland asked if the questions could be emailed and not Reply All.

223
224 After discussion it was decided to send an email to get the questions and topics for questions. Mr. Uken
225 will work with Tim on coordinating dates, times and questions.

226
227 **VIII. Other Business**

228 A. Date of Next Meeting – July 14, 2022 at 4:30 p.m.

229
230 The meeting scheduled for July 14 has been cancelled.

231
232 **IX. Chair's Report**

233
234 There was no Chair's Report.

235
236 **X. Adjournment**

237
238 Mr. Uken adjourned the meeting at 6:20 p.m.

239
240
241 *Please note the minutes reflect the order of the agenda and may not necessarily reflect the order of business*
242 *conducted at the meeting.*