

## Broadband Task Force – July 28, 2021

**Attendees:** Sally Kadle  
Jim Northrup  
Earl McKee  
Sally Greene  
Terri Buckner  
Doug Noell  
Catharine Rice  
Todd Broucksou  
Kathy Zopfi  
Patricia Hull  
Travis Myren  
Victoria Deaton

### Action Items:

- Talk to BOCC about Durham Tech and cost of training - Comm Greene/McKee
- Ask OC Planning staff to provide a memo of potential permitting delays and ways to expedite the permitting process – Jnorthrup
- Invite Craig/Michael to present to Task Force – Jnorthrup
- Check with Dean of Durham Tech about training – Victoria Deaton
- Outline sorts of training needed for community colleges – Travis/Victoria
- Sorting/weighting matrix fleshed out – Jnorthrup (goal 2 weeks)
- Consult with Legal about ownership of fiber – Jnorthrup
- Sanitize RFP; have a clean version for review by 8/6 and for discussion on 8/11 - JNorthrup
- Need to know from Legal if we can ask vendors questions prior to release of RFP - JNorthrup

### Agenda:

5:30 PM Welcomes and introductions - Greene/McKee

5:33 PM Approve Minutes (July 21 and 22, 2021) - Greene/McKee/Group

5:35 PM Provider Meeting Debrief - Green/McKee

5:50 PM Next Steps (RFP) Greene/McKee/Group

6:15 PM Old Business/New Business/Housekeeping - Greene/McKee

6:30 or 7 PM Adjourn

### Notes:

Meeting started at 5:34pm

### Approve Minutes (July 21 and 22, 2021) Greene/McKee/Group

Todd so moves; seconded – minutes for 7/21 and 7/22 are approved

## Provider Meeting Debrief – Greene/McKee

- Comm Greene – pleased with number of vendors and interested what they had to say and timelines they gave; matrix doc was very popular YAY Kathy!; doesn't know next steps and not sure how to move forward with RFP
- Jim – JN and Catharine reviewed the provider debrief doc; simplifying the RFP; looking at vendor meeting notes and using responses to refine RFP and scoring matrix to make sure we have good questions and a weighted scoring matrix
- Catharine – did such a great job; great turnout; \$5mil brought a good response to the table; educational; one of the benefits is that shows we can simplify RFP; figuring out what kind of weighting system and what priorities are; narrow down top 3; many providers suggested pumping the brakes on the RFP; State participation may or may not affect how county spends the money; 1) spend county's money and go ahead without knowing state plan or 2) wait for State's legislation before moving forward; possibly put out a simplified RFP now?; asks for how much participation the vendor wants from the county; Jim prefers to have RFP ready by the last week in August or first week in Sept (4-6 weeks start to finish); should be able to review all vendor info on spreadsheet then review RFP and remove all unnecessary language then have group review in mid-August ; #1 priority for Jim is to get RFP finalized
- Comm McKee – does what Jim proposes align what vendors were asking for? Vendors were suggesting 7 weeks from meeting last week; McKee encourages not to wait for state legislature because all other counties are pushing for money too so go ahead and get lined up to get started; Todd – many vendors asked for 90 days but waiting for the state to get it through their process would put us behind the curve
- Victoria – vendors said if all counties are moving forward at the same time, might be supply chain issues (
- Terri – one of the things the vendors said was that they need support from OC; Durham and Alamance Tech for training/employment of students; work with Planning staff to work out permitting process in advance – start this work early, pre-planning; also how to handle County ownership of fiber? Ownership defined by # of strands or # of conduits?
- Comm McKee - Makes sense to do as much concurrently as possible but would RFP amendment be problematic? Would permitting expediting be a BOCC thing?
- Terri – amendment can be done; can say working with Community Colleges to build up the area workforce without defining a “workforce ready date”
- Comm Greene – who paid for community college training? (Ask Comm Greene what training program we were talking about for Durham tech?)
- Comm McKee – talk to Durham Tech about cost of training and how long it might take to get started; ACTION: Comm Greene/McKee – need to talk to BOCC about this
- Jim – no conduit/fiber would be county owned??? Confirm w/Jim that this is what he said; just the parts attached to buildings; need permits for towns that have jurisdiction of the right-of-ways; most of permitting slowdown will need to leverage relationships with DOT and towns/town Boards; where permitting comes into play is if they need to use any county facilities (like telecommunication huts for fiber comms); DOT and towns own every road but private roads; Piedmont Electric has easements on private property; they'll want fees for pole attachments; ISP's may ask County to help get favorable rate for pole attachments on Piedmont Electric poles; engineering will identify stream crossings, etc; work with jurisdictions and DOT to streamline permitting process

- Catharine – NCDOT has rep as being slow; other permitting issues to consider – requirement that company can only block traffic on certain roads for a specific amount of time
- Terri – get a jump by submitting engineering docs early; be proactive
- Jim – incumbent on providers to tell us what their permitting process is, have exact knowledge of what it costs and how long it takes; ask vendors what specific training they’re going to want to make available;
- McKee – ACTION - ask our Planning staff to provide a memo of potential permitting delays and ways to expedite the permitting process (for H’boro, Chapel Hill, Mebane, etc); believes that Planning will have good handle on what other companies have done before - what they needed to do and how long did it take - ?
- Comm Greene – have laid fiber recently in H’boro; how did that go? Jim – vendor says H’boro slowing down the permitting process; wasn’t county slowing process, it was DOT; Netplanner lays fiber and connects buildings
- Jim – towns (Chapel Hill and Carrboro) got google fiber; can go to Planning Dept as well as go to the towns; Todd – going to Town and County planning folks and ask about road construction that’s coming in the future (master plan) – providing that info to vendor will help speed up the engineering process
- Todd – asks Terri to elaborate on problems with Google; problems were on town’s side; towns were overwhelmed with permitting requests; need a compromise between way permit requests come in and dept being able to do their regular jobs; define SLAs
- Terri – invite Planning Depts and NCDOT to meeting to discern what will be needed for this project and anticipated bottlenecks; ACTION – Jim ask Craig B and/or staff (Michael Harvey?) to present about OC Permitting; is it possible to reduce SLA from 90 days to 60 days for example?
- Catharine - question on training – are we saying there would be another line in the RFP regarding training? ACTION – see what OC did with Warnock??? And what Durham Tech might be able to do? – on the job training program at Durham Tech
- Victoria – ACTION – will check with Dean about training (currently has line training); asks Travis to provide what sort of training – Victoria and Travis to talk 7/29
- Terri – talk to OC and Alamance high schools for training
- Comm Greene – how do we go forward without knowing where extra money is going to come from? Catharine – 12 companies showed up with just knowing \$5 million; suggests asking vendor for a match (skin in the game)
- Todd – OC won’t own fiber for \$5 million; possibly some strands; will lose some of the smaller vendors if require a matching contribution
- Catharine – need to figure out what model we’re looking for re: County ownership; likely not OC owning fiber
- Travis – RFP needs “claw back” clause for clawing back grant money; right of first refusal if they sell/close; Comm McKee – claw back gives us some leverage; doesn’t see owning fiber
- Pat Hull – to what extent can we put burden on vendors to come back with a plan (x numbers of households by x date) – they come up with schedule => permitting will take x length of time; # of households will be; will cost x \$\$\$? If it’s all just about the \$\$, may rule out smaller vendors; Jim describes it as a reverse auction strategy – don’t put all weight on cost
- Jim – ACTION hopes to have scoring/weighting matrix fleshed out in 2 weeks; probably want monetary requirement (match, etc) and ownership to be negotiable via scoring and weighting; RFP will be soliciting feedback, have to have criteria for interviews (must have 3 vendors versus 2, for example); can ask if vendor has allowed ownership before?
- Catharine – vendors asked for 90 days for engineering study

- Terri – County ownership in order to stimulate competition; “over build”
- Catharine – many examples of building/owning, building/access, etc; right of first refusal used in Cleveland and worked well; ask what ownership looks like to the vendors; ACTION – Jim to ask County Attorney about ownership???? (ask Jim)
- Comm McKee – does anyone have a definitive idea of what ownership model would be? Todd – overall ownership is County owns fiber/conduit that goes from one point of county to other then lease strands of fiber to vendors; let Rverstreet build fiber then give 25 strands of fiber to OC then we can lease out our strands to other vendors; claw back (failure to perform) is good idea then we can take the fiber back and own it; problem with ownership is that someone has to maintain the fiber (not always easy or cheap) and owner of fiber has to pay for problems; thinks we need about \$12 million to have a fiber ownership conversation but for \$5 million the claw back would work; would be a maintenance charge for leased fiber; Terri – town of Carrboro (worked with NCDOT to put in their own fiber); when Carrboro finally came to table with UNC, MCNC – if county owned fiber, can we connect to MCNC fiber? Todd – yes. MCNC could backhaul to other cheaper providers; would be a cost savings; make it cheaper than other carriers if don’t have to perform fiber builds; in addition to \$5 million, can reduce county costs, etc to sweeten the pot; MCNC is an option for internet providers to connect to; MCNC is for economic development
- Catharine – Treasury has decided that as long as you use funds to unserved, that system can be used to provide service to the served – could not only serve unserved but could over build to serve populations that aren’t unserved; State is trying to limit funding to just un-underserved so not supporting overbuild (look up meaning overbuild)
- Catharine – Jim aiming for draft to review in 2 weeks (before 8/11) then address concerns/changes (by 8/25) and then if ready, release by NLT 9/8 (drop dead date)
- Terri – would be helpful to have completely clean copy of RFP so requests clean copy without tracked changes and no history; ACTION – Jim to sanitize version that he gives to task force – clean copy without changes (by 8/11); have a version for review by 8/6 for discussion on 8/11
- Catharine – vendors like simple; have all be consistent and simple with all questions; Catharine, Kathy and Jim will be working on it
- Terri – start with a full list of questions (can do this over email) then can start on RFP
- Comm Greene – ACTION: need to know if we can ask vendors questions prior to release of RFP? ACTION - Jim to ask John Roberts
- Terri – have 2 people from community who’ve attended several meetings – do they have a way to communicate w/Task Force their questions/concerns/ etc; yes, currently sending email to Jim and/or to BOCC

**Next Steps – (all info above)**

**Motion to adjourn** – Terri moves; no objections

**Adjourn – 7:11**