Attendees:
Jim Northrup
Catharine Rice
Doug Noell
Earl McKee
Kathy Zopfi
Sally Kadle
Sally Greene
Todd Broucksou
Keith Conover (Broadband Infrastructure Office for State of NC – taking Jeff's place in this meeting)
Terri Buckner
Anna Richards
Vasu Kilaru

Attendee:
Tony Blake

Action Items:
- **JNorthrup:** to share Derek Kelly's clarification of Question 2 with team and then formulate an answer
- Issue clarifying amendment to the RFP to add "If so, how?" to Q12 (regarding stimulate competition for service within the county); if ranking is 15/0 they describe how their proposal would stimulate competition (only on/off option)
- **Catharine**: email group 10/7 with new language on Q11 and Q12 for all to review/respond
- **JNorthrup**: Put "Interim Steps Beyond the Current RFP" item on Nov 3rd meeting agenda
- **ALL**: let JNorthrup know who to invite to the meeting to discuss Interim Steps

DRAFT AGENDA October 6, 2021 @ 5:30 PM DRAFT AGENDA

5:30 PM   Welcomes and introductions - Greene/McKee

5:33 PM   Approve Minutes (August 25, 2021) - Greene/McKee/Group

5:35 PM   RFP Provider Meeting Debrief - Northrup/Rice/Myren/Group

5:50 PM   No House Left Behind - how a future contract may compensate for an inaccurate map - Greene/McKee/Group

6:20 PM   Interim Steps Beyond the Current RFP - Greene/McKee/Group

6:50 PM   Old Business/New Business/Housekeeping - Greene/McKee

7:00 PM   Adjourn

Welcomes and Introductions

Approve minutes (August 25, 2021) – Doug moves to approve, Todd seconds, motion carries and minutes are approved

Debrief from Provider meeting:
- JN: not much to report; questions were the primary conversation and it was over in less than ½ hour. Had one call from Spectrum since the meeting asking for all address data for Orange County, pointed them to the GIS data website
- JN: Q2 – question was unintelligible; thinks we would be interested in knowing if they're going to the state for funding because it may exclude us from using $5million; met with the state and was concerned about how their legislation was written to make sure it didn't conflict with what our RFP was going to say; might now be eligible for funding defined in legislation currently in the works; BIO office said legislation should be in place before we award RFP; KC: some counties (Haywood County) have helped companies with their matching funds; will share Derek Kelly's clarification on his question w/CR and then formulate an answer
    - CR: Q2 – question was scrambled; asking would we want them to report if they went to the state for funding; until we know what the question really is, can't speculate and need to wait for clarification on what their question is
- JN: Q3 – generated a lot of discussion; nowhere in RFP do we discuss FTTH; want to make sure this committee understands what RFP is asking for and make sure he knows what is expected; FTTH literally means fiber to the home; do we want to make a change to the scoring matrix to weight FTTH more heavily?; if decision is to require FTTH, then need to change RFP
    - CR: Q3 ARPA standard is final design must be 100/100 to and from the home; want it to be as close to FTTH as is possible; Vasu: paid TWC to come and install and they did not do FTTH, did fiber from Old 86 and Arthur Minnis then installed copper; Terri: how are we going to verify that these solutions are going to get us 100/100 reliably; Spectrum "copper to the home" is never going to be 100/100, JN: has Spectrum "copper to the home" and gets 100/100 reliably; with OpenBB contract, had a sampling of the homes and looked at Phase 1 cluster, identified 90-100 test houses so suggests we write performance clauses into the contract – prove that for anybody who signs up for the service, gets 100/100 – write a bond that allows us to recoup some of the money if provider doesn't meet performance specifications; ask provider to clearly define connectivity to the house
    - CR: if 5g provider saying they can provide 100 up, can find out; Todd: age of Spectrum infrastructure will impact speed homes are seeing, could mean that homes are sharing a pipe to the internet that's not fat enough to support # of households on it; Todd: engineering design review should provide proof that provider can meet 100/100 requirement; Terri: likes CR's suggestion that we ask homes what speeds they're seeing; JN: OC will be hiring engineer to review technical specs providers proffer before contract is let ; Doug: ask provider if they can say amount of fiber planning to deliver; Todd: do the engineering then hold back the money; JN: engineering study (experts) funding will come from $5million; SG: this discussion makes all more important that Q3 is answered clearly and provides 100/100; EM – for BOCC, thinks the last few feet may not be absolutely critical that it be fiber but is critical that it's 100/100 (mainline fiber, branchline fiber, fiber down the road, fiber into the neighborhood) must be 100/100 (more would be better) and must be verifiable and scalable into the future, need to be assurances or no money; Todd – using speed test servers, using 3 different ones and take average of 3 be equal to or better than 100/100 – helps define not just

infrastructure but confirms speed is 100/100; JN: fast network with low latency (how fast send/receive, latent network is slow); JN: if we have a preference for medium, need that info for the ranking exercise, should we consider adding some ranking metrics if we want future proof language; Terri: have to be very clear on what we're evaluating with these proposals, not sure we're there yet, may take an update to the RFP; SG: need to have discussion; Todd: can't change the requirements and can't grade it on something not in the RFP

- CR: taken on effort of "cheatsheet" (review sheet) on how to rate proposals; hit 3 areas where RFP may need editing:

  Q2 – realized we never had a standard of what "expected cost" range would be

  #10 – under "County Ownership"; proposal describes ownership model; need to make ranking 10 or 0

  #12 – whether we want to give points that would stimulate competition for service in OC, different than #11; rating could be 15/0/0

- JN: is there anything in RFP that asks respondent to provide an example of how this is going to stimulate competition for service within the county or is that just a yes/no answer; how do they prove it? Discussion about "overbuild" and "county ownership" ensues. Need quantitative way to evaluate (Q#11); CR: do we want to give extra points to provider

- SG: suggests doing clarifying amendment to RFP

- Todd: discussion of points; EM: reduce #11 to 10 points; moderate; Terri: explains possible county ownership models; SG: could we put Q11 and Q12 together to get more points for overbuilding

- JN: maybe question should be "is this an open access network that you're proposing?" (in Q11); DSL should not be considered "an option" which is the reason we're doing this proposal for 5200 homes

- DN: if we have a county ownership model, does that mean county has to answer questions like "my internet speed isn't as high as it should be"; JN: county does not want to be an ISP; if we had infrastructure, we'd have an open access model; KC: competition is the thing that moves the needle the fastest; Terri: suggests rewrite #11; SG: in favor of finessing language around "stimulating competition" (overbuilding, open access, conduit); CR: offering conduit is a very strong position; JN: team to take a couple of days to reword these questions then work on addendum

- Decision is to let CR send pass at new language tomorrow morning 10/7

No house left behind

- EM: residents calling to say "my house isn't on the map"; JN: how do we compensate for the known inaccuracies on our map?; place between address points and geographic area to achieve "no house left behind"; Terri/CR/SG: suggests interactive map that allows residents to add their address; CR: for short term tell residents to enter address, and RFP asked for project cost based on 5200+ addresses

- JN: Form is ready, Jim to review then will be released by the end of the week; not real time updating but will shoot for updating weekly

Interim steps beyond the RFP

- Tabling for this meeting; would like to get a jump on it (put on next meeting agenda); SG: want to focus on interim solution now

Next meeting – ~~10/20/2021~~ 11/3/2021; discuss towers; JN: provide locations that Emergency Services is considering for new towers (Federal Engineering Study – put together a $24million tower plan for putting towers in all over county; first towers were in southern OC that already had good internet);

Old/New business – no items

Adjourn – 7:27pm

Questions/answers from provider meeting:

Team: Here are the questions and answers, we'd like to discuss at tonight's meeting.   Specifically, there has been some conversation outside of the committee regarding question 3. I need to follow up with the vendor on question 2 to ask him to make it more intelligible.

And I need to follow up with Purchasing to make sure that we can release vendor contact info. I am thinking yes since it was a public meeting. And, having the vendor know who each other are may foster collaborative responses which if memory serves me well is something this committee/RFP was trying to foster/allow.

1.   Question:
How does this process relate to the possibility of NC CAB program or NC GREAT grant program and current language in legislation, that basically says, if a county starts and does their own process prior to x date, potentially, that county will be excluded from being able to access GREAT grant funds or even have providers apply for GREAT grants funds in that county?

Answer:
Until there is legislation that is passed by the NC Legislature, any answer would be speculative.

2.   Question:
[unintelligible]…if the intent is to go after a GREAT grant where the state is contributing 60 or 70% of the project then us saying "okay, of the remaining balance here's how we think we could partner with OC and here's what we think we would need" are you looking for that type of response to be built into the RFP?

Answer:
Please refer to RFP Section 3.4.3. The RFP does not ask for the source of the Applicant's share of the funding, but "the County reserves the right, as a function of the RFP analysis process, to require Applicants to identify the source(s) of Applicant's share of project funding." If the Applicant chooses to describe the source of its funding, and that funding will require some level of participation from the county, the RFP does not prohibit the Applicant from including that information in its proposal.

3.   Question:
Will you entertain other solutions that meet the same results other than straight broadband - such as 5G LTE? Will you consider a private cellular solution in lieu of fiber broadband to the home? 5g/LTE Private cellular?

Answer:
Please refer to Section 3.4. at page 14 of the RFP, which asks the Applicant to answer the question: "Can you provide fiber-based, broadband service to the targeted households with that infrastructure designed to provide a minimum of 100X100 symmetrical internet service to and from the identified households? Section 3.4.1 also states: "Applicants should describe their network (*e.g.*, fiber PON to the home) whether it will provide a minimum of 100 Mbps symmetrical to and from the home, and whether it will service all 5,000+ households identified by the County, and if not, why not.

4.   Question:
5000+ households are identified as unserved as part of the RFP. If there are additional homes that are identified post-award, how does the county look to handle those additional homes?

Answer:
The county anticipates that this will be handled during the contract negotiation phase of the project.

5.   Question: Will you release the contact information of the vendors that have participated in the meeting.