



**Scandia Internet Action Committee
Meeting Minutes
Thursday, April 9, 2020 at 6:00 PM
Meeting conducted via GoToMeeting and Boxcast.tv**

Attendance: K. C. Douglas, Chair Robert Wilmers, John Carney, Vice Chair Marschall Smith, and Cathy Mackiewicz

Absent: None

Also in Attendance: City Council Liaison Patti Ray, City Council Liaison Steve Kronmiller, and City Administrator Ken Cammilleri

Call to Order – Chairperson Wilmers called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

Approval of Agenda Motion by Carney, second by Mackiewicz to approve the agenda with an amendment to include an update on address lists with Midco and an update on wireless internet services at the Scandia Community Center. Motion carried.

Approval of Minutes – Motion by Carney, seconded by Smith, to approve minutes for December 3, 2019, January 9, 2020, January 23, 2020 and March 12, 2020 with corrections offered provided by Carney relating to typos. ~~Motion carried.~~ Carney asked for clarification on a discussion mentioned in the March 12th proceedings relating to a reference to future development of a local grant program and to get clarification on the two Committee members who may reach out to other communities for collaboration opportunities. Motion carried.

Scandia Broadband Expansion Plan – Wilmers briefed the committee on the current status of progress. He pointed out the Phase 1 of the 2020 Broadband Internet Expansion Project will proceed, however, there will be potential issues as technicians will likely not be entering homes for installation due to Covid 19.

Public Relations - Ray provided the Committee with an update on Mayor Maefsky's upcoming appearance on the River Radio program in Marine on St. Croix that will be focused on the City's response to Covid 19. The Mayor plans to point out that there are about 300 homes in the City that have services available to them that have not opted to obtain the service.

Connection Cost Disparities - Smith pointed out that a next-door neighbor never got follow-up regarding a request to connect. Wilmers explained that it will cost \$5,700 to make the connection to that household and that the information was withheld at Wilmers request so that he could provide the explanation to the Committee. Wilmers indicated that he was concerned how to go about

explaining the variations in connection costs, especially as it relates to variability between adjacent or nearby neighbors. He shared his own estimates for trenching costs that suggest Midco's estimates may likely be an accurate reflection of the overall costs. The Committee agreed that homes with variable distances from services in the street will likely need to be served wirelessly.

Mallard Avenue N. neighborhood self-funded connection opportunity update – Ray reported that she was unable to meet with residents of the neighborhood regarding this opportunity as she was still waiting for estimated service expansion costs from Midco. This project would potentially bring in 8 additional households.

Other self-funded connection opportunities – The members discussed opportunities at 238th Street N. and two properties on 240th Street N. west of Manning Avenue N.

Discussion on Rural Digital Opportunities Fund (RDOF) – It was pointed out that 389 homes could be included in a future phase with Midco through this program. Bidding will be done for projects next year. It was agreed that the addresses on Mallard Avenue N., 238th Street N., and 240th Street N. should be compiled and submitted to Midco to be potentially included in this year's buildout.

Wireless "Hop" Opportunities – The Committee discussed the challenges of creating wireless linkages to close gaps. They noted that such an effort would require the creation of an organization to buy bulk internet, maintenance of the wireless network buildout, and billing while coordinating with Midco to assure that there would be no conflict with Midco service take rates. The committee noted that this might be a means to offer reasonable connections within a shorter period of time. Self-funded wireless expansion options will need labor and/or volunteers to help implement this. The committee agreed to defer the project until the results of the 2021 Broadband Internet Expansion Grant season and the RDOF grant application period. Greater clarity on remaining households to be served will be easier to identify.

Update on Letter of Support and financial commitment for partnering with Midco's 2021 Minnesota DEED Broadband Expansion Grant - Ray read the letter to the committee. Wilmers summarized the next steps for proceeding with the next grant. He noted that Midco will also be proceeding with RDOF that will not require the City's financial participation. The Committee decided to reach out to State Representative Dettmer and State Senator Housley to encourage DEED to consider another grant award for Scandia. It was also suggested to reach out to former Vice President Walter Mondale, the DEED Commissioner, and the department's grant program coordinator. Cammilleri volunteered to help reach out to the Rep. Dettmer and Sen. Housley. Forest Lake High School Principal Jim Caldwell will be contacted by Kronmiller. Ray volunteered to reach out Scandia Elementary School Principal Julie Greiman. Cammilleri was to contact Superintendent Steve Massey. Cammilleri was also assigned to draft a letter of support for the 2021 Grant to share with potential supporters.

Update from Frontier – Wilmers reported to the committee that he was put into contact with Scott Bower. He pointed out the company was not in a position to commit to any particular solution for service enhancement. It was also noted that the company is currently in bankruptcy proceedings. It was agreed that Frontier was going to be a difficult partner to address access and connectivity. The

company recommended that if there were any customers who wanted to improve their speeds that they should call Frontier for assistance directly.

Working with Existing Tower Owners – Wilmers reported that he has been investigating available space on local towers. He provided the committee with an example of a tower that was willing to lease space. This option would be part of procuring wireless “hop” or a fixed wireless solution. The committee agreed it would be worth while to determine the costs of a lease and explore the feasibility of this option to extend the information to Midco and use it later as part of a localized supported effort.

Wilmers provided an explanation on the downside of using cellular hotspot technology and suggested that people consider using devices with a built-in cellular modem as it often offers more generous data limits. Using hotspots or “jet packs” are often far more limited. He also suggested people considering cell phone boosters when reception is poor.

The Committee agreed to make Wilmers a single point of contact for reaching out to ISPs.

Kronmiller provided the committee with an update on efforts to better map and clarify unserved and underserved areas in the City.

Cammilleri provided a project update for the completion of public Wi-Fi and other components of the city’s network infrastructure. He noted that the project is moving forward. He indicated that volunteer assistance from Kronmiller and Wilmers may be needed.

Thursday May 7, 2020 at 6:00pm was set as the next meeting time.

The meeting adjourned 7:34 PM by successful motion by Douglas, seconded Carney.

Minutes prepared by:

Ken Cammilleri, City Administrator