



## Internet Action Committee

**Location: Online Streaming (Boxcast and GoToMeeting)**

**Thursday, May 7, 2020 at 6:00pm**

Attendance: K. C. Douglas, Chair Robert Wilmers, John Carney, Cathy Mackiewicz, and Vice Chair Marschall Smith (joined the meeting at 6:20pm)

Absent: None.

Also in Attendance: City Council Liaison Patti Ray, City Council Liaison Steve Kronmiller, City Administrator Ken Cammilleri, and Midco's Senior Director Of Government Relations Justin Forde.

**Call to Order** – Chair Wilmers called the meeting to order at 6:05pm.

**Approval of Agenda** – Motion by Douglas, seconded by Mackiewicz, to approve the agenda. Motion carried.

**Approval of Minutes from April 9, 2020** – Motion by Carney, seconded by Mackiewicz to approve the minutes of the April 9th meeting. Motion carried.

**Updates and Discussion of the Community Broadband Expansion Plan** - The Committee revisited its progress with the Broadband Expansion Plan.

**2020 Midco/State of Minnesota Broadband Expansion Grant Project** - Forde reported to the committee that the 2020 buildout with Midco is underway and is anticipating that it will be completed by mid to late summer's end. He noted that there has been improvements to service take rates in Scandia, as numbers had increased from 455 households to 488. Midco's goals will be to achieve over a 70% take rate.

**Proposed 2021 Midco/State of Minnesota Broadband Expansion Grant Project** - The Committee discussed the prospects of applying for the same state broadband expansion grant that it received in 2020 for 2021. It was noted that it was not clear what the state would be setting for goals of its next round of funding. Much discussion has been around prioritizing telemedicine and education, but with the effects of the Covid-19 Crisis these priorities may shift. The fact that the City Council committed funding to this grant again next year will clearly benefit the City request, but it was acknowledged that there is plenty of need elsewhere in the state.

**Rural Digital Opportunity Fund (RDOF)** – The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) will be launching an action in October of this year for eligible ISPs, such as Midco, to obtain funding to help bring high speed fixed broadband service to underserved or unserved rural homes and small businesses. Portions of the City of Scandia have been identified on this map. Midco has expressed its interest in potentially seeking funding from the program to complete build outs in Scandia. The program has \$20.3 billion available to fund projects.

### **Discussion of Self-Funded Expansion Areas**

***Wired Connections*** – On 238th Street N and Mallard Avenue N, the Committee was informed that there was some interest in self-funded buildouts, but there was uncertainty over the costs for buildout. Wilmers noted that for 238th Street N, Mallard Avenue N, and Melaine Trl. N, it is probable that there would be a cost of potentially \$20,000 to \$35,000 in order to reach these homes. This estimate includes a current cost approximation of \$6 to \$8 per foot for soil boring to bury service lines. However, it was noted that this cost will likely vary depending on terrain and the distances that need to be covered. Midco offered to help prepare a rough cost estimate for Mallard Avenue.

The Committee recognized the current self-funded opportunities that are being considered pose an interesting dilemma. Self-funding will bring services to these neighborhoods more quickly. However, if these areas were able to potentially wait, it is possible they could get these services to their area with significantly less cost with future state or federal grants that would be able to cover service expansion costs. It was noted that it might be practical to wait on some self-funded opportunities for this reason.

***Wireless Connections*** - The Committee acknowledged that there will likely be areas of the City that would not be feasible for wired service connections due to cost-density ratios and the logistics of distances and terrain. Currently, Minnesota Broadband expansion funding and RDOF cannot be used for wireless service delivery. The Committee acknowledged that as wired solutions are exhausted, further exploration into funding options will be needed. This includes looking into an organization structure that may be able to operate the network that would support the service. It was noted that Midco does operate similar networks elsewhere in its territory.

***Report of Tower Availability*** - Wilmers reported on an example of an American Messaging Tower site in the community that is available to be leased, and would likely work well for supporting the infrastructure of a wireless solution. He noted that these options will be limited by terrain and sitelines, but in some cases could potentially cover as much as 150 households.

**Community Center Project** – Cammilleri reported that wireless internet improvements at the Scandia Community Center are well underway. He noted that most of the implementation will be completed tomorrow. The Committee instructed Cammilleri to promote the new wireless access once the project is operational.

**Website** - The Committee also discussed how information about the Internet Expansion Project could be better displayed and promoted on the City's website.

**Next Meeting Date** – The Committee agreed to hold its next meeting on June 11, 2020 at 6:00pm. The meeting will be conducted electronically and telephonically if the Governor's Executive Order continues existing requirements.

**Adjournment** – The Committee adjourned at 7:21pm upon successful motion by Carney, seconded by Smith.

Minutes Prepared by:  
Ken Cammilleri, City Administrator

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