



**SHERMAN COUNTY COURT & CITIES
JOINT BROADBAND WORK SESSION
WASCO EVENTS CENTER**

MINUTES

JUNE 27, 2018

Present: Nate Stice, Neil Patte, Aaron Cook, Judge Thompson, Commissioner Dabulskis, Seth von Borstel, Carrie Pipinich, Kayla von Borstel, Ali Roark, Carol von Borstel, Dan Bubb, Drew Messenger, Jeanne Dabulskis, Gail Macnab, Mike Smith, Gerald Casper, Rod Patten, Marie Kuettel, Mary Macnab, Terry Fuhler, Carol Ohmstead, Sam Ohmstead

1,2 Welcome/Sherman Cities Broadband Initiative Overview

The work session was called to order at 7:00 p.m.

Judge Thompson gave an overview of the Sherman County Fiber Project. It has been stated that every house which gains high speed internet, gains a \$5,000 increase in value. Approximately six months ago, Sherman County began working to get the homes in its towns connected to internet fiber. The County went out for an RFP (Request for Proposal) to find an entity interested connecting the homes in the towns to fiber. A committee was comprised of a representative from the County, and each of the Cities to review the RFP's. Three proposals were received, GorgeNet was chosen as the top candidate, as they submitted the most complete proposal. They proposed installing fiber to every home in each of the four cities. GorgeNet will also supply 50% of the total cost with the County and Cities matching the other 50% in a private/public partnership.

Fiber currently runs the full length of County which GorgeNet can use. Judge Thompson believed this would be a beneficial economic tool, and great for businesses; individual home owners would be able to stream TV, have landline telephone service, and high speed internet with this provider. Hook up to the service could be immediate once the project is completed, and based on the individual's requested speed; package prices proposed were reasonable with unlimited space on the fiber lines. This service would be reliable as it is buried cable for the length of the County, however, to the home it would be connected overhead.

Carrie Pipinich, Mid-Columbia Economic Development District, gave a presentation on Broadband. Broadband is an advanced communications system capable of providing high speed transmission of service such as data, voice, and video over the internet. Broadband is critical infrastructure today for communities to continue to grow and thrive. Broadband would be beneficial to many as a way to stay connected to loved ones who live farther away, ability to pay bills electronically, as well as benefit the

entertainment aspect of the service. There also would be broader community benefits as well for first responders and local community members, to gain better access regarding public safety, and for educational access to bring in resources that small communities may not have otherwise. Healthcare access is another huge benefit for those who live too far, or are too unwell to travel for healthcare related needs; with broadband individuals, can check records online, use health promotion tools, and other tele-health options.

Broadband is critical for economic development as research shows 60% of businesses identified broadband essential to selecting a business location, and 85% stated it was critical to stay in that location due to growth. Research also shows 45% of all households would be willing to relocate to find housing with broadband; when asked the same question to households under the age of 35; that number increased to 65%. In regards to speed types, Carrie explained it depends on the type of use, and how many devices are being used at the same time. Many people don't realize that many items count as a "device" as they are not computers; such items include smart phones, smart thermostats, tablets, gaming consoles, etc.

The cost is significant to bring in the connectivity due to the distances between the towns in a rural community which would be cost prohibitive for a private provider. Additionally, building the network would be costly; in larger areas there is much more coverage to spread out the repayment cost.

Carrie discussed the difference between long haul, middle mile, and last mile fiber connections. In fall of 2018 surveys were administered on current internet connections and broadband; 60% of respondents were not satisfied with the internet, and 80% said they would purchase a new service if a better one was provided. The issues noted from the surveys were complaints of slow speeds and reliability, which are priorities. Residents currently are using connections to telework, have home based businesses, and access education. The compiled data was used to create the RFP which contained four goals: availability to all homes/ businesses in town, scalable technology, network capable to growing with bandwidth needs, and lowest reasonable cost for the investment (affordable for everyone involved).

Seth von Borstel, Moro City Council and Review Team Member, gave a briefing on additional positive outcomes for Sherman County fiber. He stated the basic service is 25mbps (megabytes per second) download and 5mbps upload for \$44.95 per month with an initial hook up fee of a \$100, the next package is 100mbps download and 10mbps upload for \$49.99 per month and hook up fee, and more various options are available for residential and businesses; the most expensive package would be \$99.00 per month. The service can provide TV hook up to fiber. He looked up prices and Direct TV is \$35 per month for 150 channels; he pays over \$100 per month with not nearly as much included with his current provider. Phone service can also be hooked to fiber which will cost approximately \$15 per month. Seth estimates each household should be able to cut their normal monthly internet bill by about half, by making the change. Connectivity for children and education is huge, and will be detriment if they are unable to connect for online education and courses at Sherman School District or while in College, etc.

Commissioner Dabulskis informed the public that Sherman had been selected as an Opportunity Zone, and is unsure what the restrictions are, but the Fiber Project could be a great opportunity to support the County.

Dan Bubb, GorgeNet, spoke stating participation of entire community is essential. He would like to have a display area set up that everyone can see exactly what can be hooked up and how it will work. This project for community fiber is different than many other fiber projects, as GorgeNet is willing to help subsidize. GorgeNet see their roots in rural areas, and they want to help in this area where no one else is willing. In today's era, kids and grandkids will need internet, and expect to use it for entertainment, homework, research, etc. He predicts most current services would cost approximately \$174 total per month, whereas Gorge Net would be \$95 per month. Dan also wanted to make clear to the public, the amount proposed in the RFP will not change throughout the process, as it is key to getting everyone on board; a community project means needing the whole community on board. There are many details to still work out. Many times there are franchise fees, which usually go back to the cities to use on projects. The residents would be paying for something that would stay within the community.

3. Public comment

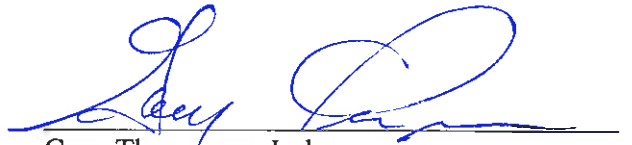
- Will GorgeNet work on connecting the Cities first, and then connect those that live outside city limits?
 - o Fiber will not go immediately to the homes outside of city limits. It will free up the Broadband space, so those who live on outskirts, will have a better connection. Fiber will reach those within the city limits proper. For those on fringes of city limits, GorgeNet might be able to look at how to provide fiber service, as well as wireless service to others as well; they do not want to limit their service area.
- When there are issues of the system being down, will it be fixed right away, or will it take 3-4 days as it does currently?
 - o GorgeNet employs 30-40 technicians, and equipment is capable of remote management and contains alarms. Generally GorgeNet is notified by these alarms before a call is made by the public. There should not be an issue with timely repair.
- Are there redundancies and back-ups?
 - o There will be a single point where it is all tied. The idea is to create a loop, so if there is a break somewhere, it can be switched to go the other direction to continue service.
- In town is everything overhead, and then buried underground between the towns?
 - o Currently there is existing fiber underground between the towns, and what will be put in the towns will be connected to that. It is cost prohibitive to bury everything for the last mile piece. There are fewer problems with fiber on poles versus underground, since many individuals dig quite frequently in town.
- If fiber is overhead, what about utilities required to be underground?
 - o In those instances the fiber will need to be trenched.
- Can you use old and abandoned conduit?
 - o GorgeNet uses old and abandoned conduit frequently, as long as it has met certain requirements.
- Dan asked the public what were some concerns so they may be addressed.
 - o There was some concern that Wasco was holding up the project as they have not fully committed. It was stated Wasco was concerned about being liable for extra costs if the grant for the Sherman Fiber project was not approved; after much consideration Wasco decided to move forward.
- What are next steps for City/County

- Next steps have been identified. An agreement between GorgeNet and the County and each of the Cities will need to be in place. Once done, Dan can work with Cities on the designs, getting residents signed up, and start implementation. Getting signed up is one of the most important keys.
- It was suggested a flyer be put together to show what fiber is capable of providing. The flyer might be able to be placed in each mailbox.
- It was suggested to have better notice for future meetings.

4. Adjourn:

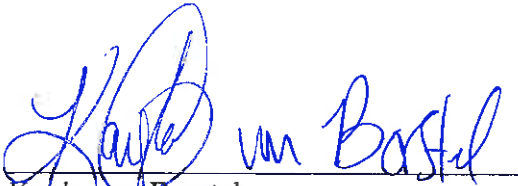
Carrie Pipinich thanked everyone for attending the meeting and reminded everyone to sign in if they hadn't already. The work session adjourned at 8:11 p.m.

Sherman County Court



Gary Thompson, Judge

Attest:



Kayla von Borstel
Administrative Assistant



Tom McCoy, Commissioner



Joe Dabulskis, Commissioner