

Jefferson County Economic Development Consortium
Broadband Meeting

Minutes from the meeting of June 30, 2011

1. Call to Order

The Broadband committee chair, Supervisor Schroeder, was unable to attend the meeting. In his absence, Amy Rinard called the meeting to order at 8:35 a.m. and chaired the meeting.

2. Roll Call

Several new members were in attendance, so individuals introduced themselves and discussed their role on the committee.

- Dennis Heling, Executive Director of JCEDC
- Amy Rinard, County Board Supervisor for Ixonia area
- Jan Rooou, County Board Supervisor
- John Foust, computer consultant from Jefferson
- Jim Romlein, Alderman from Watertown
- Catherine Kleiber, JCEDC agricultural representative
- Roland Welch, MIS Supervisor for Jefferson County
- Lynn Forseth, Exec. Director of Economic & Workforce Development for Madison Area Technical College

3. Certification of Compliance with Open meeting Laws

D. Heling certified that the meeting is in compliance.

4. Approval of Agenda

Approved as written

5. Citizens Comments

None

6. Jefferson County Backbone Network Infrastructure (Project Proposal 1)

J. Romlein indicated that he wished to discuss three potential projects for implementation in Jefferson County with the first proposal focusing on the Jefferson County Backbone Network Infrastructure (see attachment 1 – Project – Jefferson County Backbone Network (JCBN).

The group was informed that new Act 10 legislation that was recently passed will eliminate WiscNet within the next 2 years. WiscNet is a non-profit organization that fosters education, research, and public service among public and private organizations by delivering high-speed digital communications, network access, and support services. Jefferson County recognizes the importance of providing the necessary infrastructure to support economic development, of which broadband is an essential element. J. Romlein stated that there are currently two factors occurring simultaneously:

- 1.) The potential loss of WiscNet, the existing network service used by area schools, libraries, UW-Whitewater, and municipal and county governments
- 2.) JCEDC support through the creation of the Broadband committee to consider the type of infrastructure needed to attract and retain businesses now and into the future

The convergence of these two factors provides an opportunity for strategic decision making. The solution proposed by J. Romlein is the Jefferson County Backbone Network (JCBN) as described in the handout materials. J. Romlein presented several case studies of similar projects that he helped develop with the state of Minnesota (northeast quarter of state), Milwaukee Public Schools, and Monona Terrace. Project completion timelines ranged from 3 – 6 months.

Although each of the projects had some unique differences, they all required a comprehensive plan for network infrastructure that included power, data networking, and connectivity. J. Romlein suggested that Jefferson County needs to define the resources currently available to us, look for ways to purchase services in bulk, and then determine how we can best connect the resources and providers so that the network is managed and maintained over time (i.e. insuring safety of the network in the event of catastrophic events / failures, etc).

7. Review of Information Gathered

Discussion focused on the following topics related to the Backbone Network Infrastructure proposal:

- political / philosophical perspectives of private business versus government providers
- reasons for eliminating WiscNet
- assessing the impact of losing WiscNet in Jefferson County (who is affected and how)
- efforts that may be occurring at the state level to replace WiscNet
- potential concerns about back regulating broadband services by cities/counties
- can JCEDC be involved in delivering broadband services?
- private providers are more interested in obtaining large accounts (i.e. clients currently using WiscNet) than they are in bringing service to small business and residential clients due to the high cost of laying fiber versus the payback available in low population areas
- how do we determine which services to seek from private providers?

8. Discussion: Possible models for enhanced broadband availability in Jefferson County

a. Low RF Zone – Project Proposal 2

C. Kleiber discussed health issues related to radio frequency (RF) electromagnetic force (EMF) exposure (see attachment 2 – Project – Low RF Zone). J. Romlein created a second project proposal for the Broadband Committee / JCEDC to consider implementing. It involves creating a Low RF Zone in the Hubbleton area that could be promoted as a desirable living area for electro sensitive persons and a test area for interested parties to develop solutions to this problem. After some follow-up discussion, C. Kleiber recommended that if the JCEDC is going to do a broadband project, it should focus on internet dissemination via fiber optic cable rather than wireless transmitters.

b. Rural Broadband Initiative – Project Proposal 3

The third proposed project focuses on increasing access to wireless broadband services in underserved areas of Jefferson County (see attachment 3 – Project-Rural Broadband Initiative). J. Romlein expects that the current situation of receiving WIFI services from several different providers on different frequencies will collapse into one common pipeline over time. This pilot project seeks to develop a wireless WIFI service area through the development of a cooperative business model.

9. Discussion: Next Steps

There was extensive discussion regarding how to proceed with the three projects that were proposed to the broadband committee. The suggested cost of the Jefferson County Backbone Network Infrastructure project is \$25,000 for 90 days of research and development. The group discussed the merit of the proposed project, and also explored possible modifications to the project and timeline.

Several members of the committee felt that the initial steps should be to pull together more information that clearly defines the current condition of broadband access in Jefferson County and the specific problem we are trying to solve before advancing the Backbone Network Infrastructure project. This needs analysis would include mapping the existing fiber network, identifying who owns it, and determining how much dark fiber or unused capacity is currently available. The inventory would be useful to Dennis Heling and the JCEDC in working with prospective companies seeking to locate in the region. It would also provide the Broadband Committee with more data for decision making regarding next steps.

The group discussed potential sources of funding for the proposals. It was determined that funding for the Backbone Network Infrastructure project would likely need to come through the Jefferson County Board of Supervisors. J. Romlein indicated that the Low RF Zone project would be funded by the private sector.

After further discussion, A. Rinard recommended that the Jefferson County Backbone Network Infrastructure Project be presented to the JCEDC Board of Directors for discussion / approval at their meeting on July 13, 2011. J. Foust seconded the motion. The Low RF Zone and the Rural Broadband Initiative will be presented as information items.

10. Future Agenda Items

Based on JCEDC Board discussion

11. Upcoming Meetings/Seminars

JCEDC Board Meeting – July 13, 8:30 a.m.

12. Adjournment

J. Foust motioned to adjourn, seconded by A. Rinard and unanimously approved at 11:15 am.