

**DRAFT Minutes of Beaver Island Telecommunication Advisory Committee Meeting
Peaine and St James Township, Beaver Island
St James Township Hall | December 11, 2018 5:00PM**

Present

Theresa McDonough, Kathleen McNamara, Neal Green, and Wil Cwikiel. Garry Conant and Kevin Boyle present via conference call.

Absent

Paul Welke

Others

Paul Cole, Dick Mulvihill

Vice Chairperson McNamara chaired the meeting while Chairperson Boyle participated via conference call. Conant was also on conference call. There were no changes to the Draft Minutes from Nov. 19, 2018.

Vice Chairperson McNamara reviewed the Agenda for the evening.

Neal Green shared his knowledge from meeting with local TDS service agent, Rick Buchholz. TDS intends to upgrade to a META switch by February 2019.

The switch to the META would double our current bandwidth. TDS currently uses a Nokia 7750 router.

Green confirmed that the island does have a fiber loop that travels around the island from Greens Bay to the lighthouse. (a small portion at the south end is not covered). We understand that the TDS equipment could handle fiber but would be limited to DSL limitations.

Discussion follows. We will continue to pursue TDS and their future plans.

Committee needs to continue investigating GLE infrastructure.

Wil Cwikiel explained the current infrastructure for BICS. BICS has a collaborative agreement with Merit and CMU. Merit has fiber to the Stutsmanville Tower (Emmet County) which gets beamed across to the CMU Fire Station. From the CMU Fire Station, the signal is sent to the Font Lake Tower where it gets sent to the CMU Boathouse. The boathouse signal is then sent to the school. TDS is the back up for BICS if there would be a problem with the Merit service.

Vice Chairperson McNamara introduced the goals that she and Chairperson Boyle drafted.

Discovery Goals

- Enumerate current communications infrastructure (fixed and mobile broadband, mobile voice) and likely changes (for better or worse) of that infrastructure.
- Evaluate level of service in relevant competitive markets (presumably nearby, home markets for visitors, other markets that offer similar lifestyle options, but the relevant markets are inherently part of the evaluation).
- Evaluate current (and project future) gaps between Beaver Island and Competitive markets.
- Evaluate technical options for closing those gaps (taking into consideration needs for both fixed services as well as mobile data and voice) and related costs.

A brief discussion followed in reference to the above goals.

Much emphasis on learning more about Northern Lakes Economic Alliance. They are already partnering with multiple communities in efforts to improve broadband as they have developed a Broadband Fiber Consortium. The NLEA is working with Great Lakes Energy and they have grants and loans which we may be able to apply for. The NLEA has already developed economic and demographic info on other communities. Discussion about past BIA survey with results stating the island internet service was inadequate. Should Beaver Island be part of the consortium?

As a committee: What do locals want/need? What do “new” people coming to the island want/need? What do we need to attract them?

Near Term Goals

- Explore immediate options to deliver true 100-200 Mbps service at key locations accessible to visitors and residents (school, library, health center, community center, governmental center, township halls, island airports) for summer 2019
- Explore options for construction of second communications tower at Font Lake (including lease negotiations with AT&T with view to improvements to their voice and data services)
- Explore options for deployment of NMU Educational Broadband Service as stop-gap service improvement for island residents with long term goal of assuring broader availability of mobile data and low-cost broadband.
- Compare these options to longer term investments in fiber runs between Font Lake tower and school, school to health center and health center to fire station tower.

Discussion follows. Mulvihill has been working with USDA on tower pricing. GLE has mentioned commitment to 3 towers by 2020. The highest speed they anticipate is 50 MB. Discussion about needing 2nd tower at Font Lake site. There isn't enough tower space.

Vice Chairperson McNamara would like to speak with County about wanting/needing new tower due to their new location.

Remote office/home office workers: we need to make room for summer work residents. We will explore options for these individuals.

Medium Term Goals

- Implementation either as part of a public-private partnership or as a community project of technical infrastructure necessary to “close the gap” anticipating that this will likely be fiber on the island and PtP microwave backhaul.

Discussion follows on Connect Michigan proposal, GLE commitment or partnership, loans and grants.

Long Term Goals

- Fiber connection to the mainland based on need and projected ability to support growing backhaul needs using PtP microwave backhaul.

Discussion follows on some long term goals. The island wants fiber infrastructure; what would GLE use on the island so that we achieve same service as mainland? Where are towers for back haul? Is there equipment that should be removed from towers?

- Committee members will further investigate goals discussed.
- Green and Dick Mulvihill will define the current internet communications infrastructure.
- Conant will define the current mobile phone communications infrastructure.
- Vice Chairperson McNamara and Paul Cole will evaluate the level of internet service on the island relative to relevant competitive markets.
- Chairperson Boyle, Cwikiel and McDonough will explore immediate options to delivery true 100 – 200 Mbps service at key locations for summer of 2019.
- Chairperson Boyle to continue to explore options for deployment of NMU Educational Broadband Service.
- Chairperson Boyle and Vice Chairperson McNamara will redraft goals for committee discussion.

Next Meeting Date

The next BITAC Meeting will be on Tuesday January 15, 2019 at 5:00PM at the Beaver Island Community School conference room.