



# Minutes

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## Rural Access to Broadband Internet Technology (RABIT) Task Force

**Meeting Date:** November 18, 2020  
**Meeting Time:** 11:00 a.m.  
**Location:** Microsoft Teams Meeting  
**Prepared by** Sarah Merrifield, Executive Assistant Committees of Council

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### A. Call to Order

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Deputy Mayor Rob Potter called the meeting to order at 11:05 a.m. with Councillor Rob Sampson and Mayor Alar Soever present.

Town staff present were Chief Administrative Officer Shawn Everitt and Director of Operations Shawn Carey.

- **Task Force Member Attendance**
- **Additions to the Agenda**

#### **E.1.1 SWIFT Funding Announcement**

##### **Declaration of Pecuniary Interest and general nature thereof**

NOTE: In accordance with the *Municipal Conflict of Interest Act* and the Town Procedural By-law 2019-56, Rural Access to Broadband Internet Technology (RABIT) Task Force members must file a written statement of the interest and its general nature with the Clerk for inclusion on the Registry.

None

- **Review of Minutes (November 4, 2020)**

Minutes were reviewed and deemed sufficient.

### B. Staff Reports and Deputations

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#### **B.1 Deputations, if any**

None

## **C. Matters for Discussion**

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### **C.1 Welcome and Introduction**

- Municipality of Grey Highlands Chief Administrative Officer Karen Govan
  - Thanked the Task Force members for extending the invitation, and noted Grey Highlands is in a preliminary stage with respect to broadband internet
  - Indicated initial interest in the work of the Task Force, but noted that Grey Highlands Council has not made any determination at this time on how to move forward with provision of broadband
- Regrets sent by Municipality of Meaford Chief Administrative Officer Rob Armstrong

### **C.2 Slabtown Broadband Project Update**

- Conduit for Slabtown will be installed by end of day November 18, 2020
- Noted that Bruce Street Technologies will be invited to Task Force meetings where their project(s) are being discussed, but will not be invited to all Task Force meetings to ensure the firm is able to bid on future broadband projects, if desired

### **C.3 Status Update – Letter to Internet Providers and Public Information Centre Planning**

#### **Letter to Internet Service Providers**

- Mayor Soever has developed a letter template to send to Internet Service Providers – should be amended to include Public Information Centre details, once considered by Council
- List of Internet Service Providers being developed
- Letter circulation in early December, following Council's consideration of the November 30, 2020 Notice of Motion by Deputy Mayor Potter

#### **Public Information Centre Planning**

- Tentative date/time: Monday, January 18, 2021 – afternoon
- Invitation to be extended to Grey Highlands and Meaford, depending on direction from Council through the November 30, 2020 Notice of Motion
- Develop summary of The Blue Mountains, and participating municipalities that details:
  - Current and anticipated needs
  - Summary of challenge to date with respect to provision of rural broadband

- 10-minute presentations by Internet Service Providers that includes:
  - Introduction to the company
  - Services provided
  - Brief description of how the company can provide service to The Blue Mountains and other partnering municipalities, with draft timeline
- Invitation extended to SWIFT
- Manager of Purchasing and Risk Management for the Town to be included in process to ensure adherence to the Town's Purchasing Policy
- Following the Public Information Centre, one-on-one meetings can be set up between Internet Service Providers and the Town
- Follow-up staff report to Council following the Public Information Centre and one-on-one meetings, which should include consideration of proposed incentives to initiate broadband projects
- Suggested that municipalities may be able to leverage more funding and opportunity, and be more attractive to Internet Service Providers, by launching joint project, or applying for funding jointly
- Noted Grey Highlands largely ineligible for SWIFT funding because mapping shows provision of internet throughout the municipality – CAO Karen Govan confirmed the service available is not adequate to meet the current and future demand

#### **C.4 Branding Discussion – Mayor Soever**

- Coherent branding is important for the RABIT Task Force initiative
- Mayor Soever has drafted a concept that will be circulated to develop mockup for Task Force consideration

#### **C.5 Broadband Internet Motion – Deputy Mayor Potter**

- Motion to be circulated to Task Force members, and include wording around the Public Information Centre, and extending an invitation to Grey Highlands and Meaford to participate in the Task Force
- Motion being considered by Council at the November 30, 2020 meeting

Chief Administrative Officer Shawn Everitt left the meeting at 12:01 p.m.

#### **D. Correspondence**

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None

## **E. New and Unfinished Business**

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### **E.1 Additions to the Agenda**

#### **E.1.1 SWIFT Funding Announcement**

- Mayor Soever undertook an analysis of the recent SWIFT project announcements, and will provide the analysis to Task Force members
  - Number of homes served per km implied to be less than 200ft apart on average
  - Service providers appear to be picking densely populated areas, which does not tackle the issue of broadband internet
  - SWIFT stated it would give priority to areas with less than 15 homes/km, but recent project announcements do not appear to adhere to this criterion

#### **E.2 Items Identified for Discussion at Next Meeting**

- Ministers Briefing Note prepared by Mayor Soever
- November 30, 2020 Notice of Motion Debrief and Key Action Items
- Finalize Public Information Centre Details and Letter to Internet Service Providers
- Branding Mock Ups
- Meaford and Grey Highlands CAOs to be invited to December 2, 2020 meeting

## **F. Upcoming Meeting Dates**

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December 2, 2020

## **G. Adjournment**

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Meeting was adjourned at 12:26 p.m.