



Minutes

Rural Access to Broadband Internet Technology (RABIT) Task Force

Meeting Date: February 16, 2021
Meeting Time: 3:30 p.m.
Location: Microsoft Teams Meeting
Prepared by Sarah Merrifield, Executive Assistant Committees of Council

A. Call to Order

Deputy Mayor Potter called the meeting to order at 3:33 p.m. with Mayor Alar Soever and Councillor Rob Sampson present.

Town staff present were Chief Administrative Officer Shawn Everitt, Director of Operations Shawn Carey, Manager of Information Technology Cathy Bailey, and GIS Specialist Steve Aldred.

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

None

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

B. Public Information Centre

Under the authority of the *Municipal Act, 2001* and in accordance with Ontario's *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* (MFIPPA), The Corporation of the Town of The Blue Mountains wishes to inform the public that all information including opinions, presentations, reports, and documentation provided for or at a Public Meeting, Public Consultation, or other Public Process are considered part of the public record. This information may be posted on the Town's website and/or made available to the public upon request.

C.1 Internet Service Provider Public Information Centre

Deputy Mayor Rob Potter opened the Public Information Centre and noted that Council of the Town of The Blue Mountains created the Rural Access to Broadband Internet Technology (RABIT Task Force to review and explore “matters related to the development, implementation and progress monitoring of sustainable solutions for Rural Access to Broadband Internet in the Town of The Blue Mountains”. Deputy Mayor Potter noted that Council has approved a Task Force-Led Public Information Centre wherein competent and qualified Internet Service Providers can attend virtually to introduce their respective companies. The goal of the meeting is for the Town to be introduced to Internet Service Providers and understand the opportunities that currently exist, opportunities that may be available in the future, and to help inform members of the task force, Council, staff, and members of the public.

Deputy Mayor Potter noted that Internet Service Providers will be asked to provide suggestions to the RABIT Task Force on how to promote provision of broadband internet services to all the underserved areas within the Town. Ideally, this introductory session initiates a process that results in our rural areas being provided with affordable and reliable internet in the near future. Deputy Mayor Potter noted an overview of the meeting format was provided to Council at the January 11, 2021 meeting through a Task Force Report.

Deputy Mayor Potter noted that Public Information Centres are currently being held virtually due to COVID-19. The Public Information Centre will be moderated by the RABIT Task Force Chair and will include: a brief RABIT Task Force Introduction, Community Profile and Mapping, and Short Presentations by Internet Service Providers. For members of the public who are interested, the Public Information Centre will be livestreamed and recorded. Deputy Mayor Potter advised that the Public Information Centre can be livestreamed. At this time, the Public Information Centre is being limited to participation and comments by Internet Service Providers and Members of Council. The Town is hoping to understand the capabilities of the various Providers and then provide additional information to members of the public in a subsequent publicly held RABIT Task Force meeting. Deputy Mayor Potter advised that additional information regarding the public RABIT Task Force meeting that will be held following the Public Information Centre will be released when available.

Deputy Mayor Potter introduced the Task Force members and thanked all attendees for joining. Deputy Mayor Potter provided introductory remarks which highlighted the necessity of offering broadband solutions for all individuals. Deputy Mayor Potter welcomed the municipal attendees present including: Grey County Warden Selwyn Hicks, Grey County Chief Administrative Officer Kim Wingrove, Township of Clearview Mayor Doug Measures, Grey Highlands Mayor Paul McQueen, Grey Highlands Deputy Mayor Aakash Desai, Grey Highlands Councillors Tom Allwood, Dane Neilson, and Cathy Little, and Grey Highlands Chief Administrative Officer Karen Govan. Deputy Mayor Potter noted that fibre cable option is preferred for The Blue Mountains, but understands that this may not be feasible in some locations.

Mayor Soever provided an overview of the location of The Blue Mountains in relation to the other lower tier municipalities in Grey County. Mayor Soever provided a community profile which included a population and demographic review. Mayor Soever reviewed the current broadband coverage where 50/10 service is largely limited to areas along the waterfront, and in the settlement areas of Craigleith and Thornbury. This is a similar trend noted in Municipality of Meaford and Town of Collingwood.

Mayor Soever reviewed the population density with a focus on underserved areas; it was noted that 1,222 street addresses do not have 50/10 service, and there are 3,000 or more units in the development process. Mayor Soever emphasized that the focus of RABIT is to ensure that all areas in The Blue Mountains can be serviced and to augment the services provided by Southwestern Integrated Fibre Technology ("SWIFT"). Mayor Soever noted that as at December 16, 2020, approved SWIFT projects serve areas with 17.4 homes per kilometre or one premises per 58 metres which is a relatively high density. Mayor Soever noted that it would be helpful for residents to perform the Canadian Internet Registration Authority ("CIRA") Internet Speed Test to develop data for The Blue Mountains with respect to internet speed available.

Presentations were heard by:

- Grant Street, IPT Product Manager, Canadian Internet Registration Authority ("CIRA")
- Kirby Koster, Senior Manager – Broadband Projects, CENGN
- Heiner Phillip, P.Eng., President, Joanne Wilke, Customer Service Representative and Job Scheduler, and Rick Hamminga, Field Operations Manager, Rural Net
- Mitchel Freedman, President, Gentek Marketing
- Richard Gils, President, GBTEL Inc.
- Antonio Peeters, Chief Executive Officer, and Wendy Peeters, Sales Manager/Coordinator, Eh!Tel
- Blair Almond, President, and Rob Uhrig, Sales and Marketing Manager, Bruce Street Technologies
- Ted Baker, Manager – Enterprise, Broadcasting and Carrier Sales, Telesat

Mark Morelli, Chief Executive Officer, MaxISP was unable to attend, but did provide a presentation.

Deputy Mayor Potter noted his thanks to the Internet Service Providers for their presentations. Mayor Soever noted his thanks as well and noted his appreciation at the enthusiasm demonstrated by Internet Service Providers for the projects that would be available in The Blue Mountains. Deputy Mayor Potter noted the Town will be moving forward with meetings with Internet Service Providers and a publicly-held RABIT Task Force meeting for members of the public to attend and ask questions or provide feedback.

As no one further wished to speak, Deputy Mayor Potter declared the Public Information Centre closed.

C. New and Unfinished Business

E.1 Additions to the Agenda

E.2 Items Identified for Discussion at Next Meeting

D. Adjournment

Meeting was adjourned at 5:10 p.m.