Task Force Report

Rural Access to Broadband Internet Technology (RABIT)

Meeting Date: **April 14, 2021**
Meeting Time: **11:00 a.m.**
Location: **Town Hall, Council Chambers**
32 Mill Street, Thornbury, ON

RABIT Task Force Recommendations

NOTE: The following are recommendations from the RABIT Task Force to be considered for adoption by Council

▪ **Receive Minutes (April 14, 2021)**

   Recommended (Move, second)

   THAT Council of the Town of The Blue Mountains receives the RABIT Task Force Minutes dated April 14, 2021 as attached, for information purposes.

C   Matters for Discussion

C.1   University of Guelph R2B2 Program and RABIT Task Force

   Recommended (Move, second)

   THAT in accordance with the April 14, 2021 RABIT Task Force request, Council of the Town of The Blue Mountains directs staff to set up a meeting between the Task Force and University of Guelph R2B2 representatives for further discussion.

Minutes

Rural Access to Broadband Internet Technology (RABIT) Task Force

Meeting Date: April 14, 2021
Meeting Time: 11:00 a.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 11:00 a.m. with Mayor Soever and Councillor Sampson present.

Town staff present were Chief Administrative Officer Shawn Everitt and Manager of Communications and Economic Development Tim Hendry.

Regrets were sent by Director of Operations Shawn Carey.

- **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

- **Review of Minutes (March 31, 2021 and informal BMRA Meeting Notes dated April 13, 2021)**

  Minutes reviewed and deemed sufficient.

B. Deputations

B.1 Deputations, if any

None

C.   Matters for Discussion

C.1   University of Guelph R2B2 Program and RABIT Task Force – CAO Shawn Everitt

- R2B2 is a program through University of Guelph that has done research work throughout Ontario, including the communities of Oro Medonte and Puslinch
- Town staff met with R2B2 representatives and provided them an overview of the work undertaken to date by the RABIT Task Force, and also heard about potential opportunities for partnership between the Town and R2B2
- The group will come to the Task Force to provide a formal presentation
- R2B2 will be able to conduct research and access SWIFT survey data that will benefit the work of the Task Force

  The Task Force requested that the following motion be provided to Committee of the Whole May 4, 2021 for consideration:

  THAT the Rural Access to Broadband Internet Task Force requests Council direct staff to set up a meeting between the Task Force and R2B2 representatives for further discussion.

C.2   The Blue Mountains Internet Speed Test Challenge – Manager of Communications and Economic Development Tim Hendry and CAO Shawn Everitt

The following direction provided by Council April 6, 2021:

THAT Council receive staff report FAF.21.051 entitled, "Request for Additional Funds to Support the Rural Access to Broadband Internet Technology (RABIT) Task Force;

AND THAT Council approve additional funding for the Rural Access to Broadband Internet Technology (RABIT) Task Force to an upset limit of $10,000 to complete a Community Internet Speed Challenge throughout the month of May 2021 and as outlined in this report;

AND THAT Council acknowledge and endorse the staff resources required to complete The Blue Mountains Internet Speed Challenge as presented and highlighted in the financial impact section of this report, CARRIED.

Regarding the Speed Test Challenge, the following updates were provided:

- Signage mock ups are being prepared for installation in the community
- RABIT logo will not be used as the file does not size well on the large 6x4 signs
- Marketing initiatives and press release being prepared for early May 2021
- Blue Mountain Ratepayers Association is interested in the work of the Task Force and may help spread the messaging

C.3   May 5, 2021 Public Meeting for RABIT TF

The following direction provided by Council April 6, 2021:

THAT Council of the Town of The Blue Mountains supports the Rural Access to Broadband Internet Technology (RABIT) Task Force's request to hold a Statutory Public Meeting through a Special Meeting of Council on May 5, 2021 at 5:00 p.m. with 21-day notice to the public for the purpose of discussing the following:

- Task Force Purpose and Mandate
- Work Undertaken to Date
- The Blue Mountains Internet Speed Test Challenge
- The Blue Mountains Rural Internet Needs, CARRIED.

Task Force to review:

- **Draft Public Meeting Notice**

  Draft Notice reviewed and deemed sufficient for circulation

- **Preparation of Public Meeting Presentation**

  Executive Assistant Sarah Merrifield to prepare a draft presentation based on the February 16, 2021 PIC presentation – circulate to Task Force members to populate their respective slides

  CIRA Representative Grant Street will be contacted to attend the Public Meeting

C.4   Direction from Council regarding Municipal Telecommunications Protocol

The Task Force reviewed the Council motion noted below.

The following direction provided by Council April 6, 2021:

THAT Council receive staff report PDS.21.021 entitled "Protocol for Establishing Telecommunication Facilities – Information and Direction Report";

AND THAT Council direct Planning staff, in consultation with the Rural Access to Broadband Internet Technology ("RABIT") Task Force:

A. To initiate an update the Municipal Protocol for Establishing Telecommunication Facilities to provide added clarity regarding roles and responsibilities of the participants;
B. To initiate the preparation of a public engagement plan for the development of a Telecommunications Infrastructure Plan to better coordinate and preemptively identify areas of need, and potential strategic sites, for new telecommunication facilities, including exploring the feasibility of a regional plan developed with area municipalities;
C. To engage municipal partners to investigate the feasibility of creating a regional telecommunications infrastructure plan to better coordinate and preemptively identify areas of need, and potential strategic sites, for new telecommunication facilities;
D. To include updated Telecommunication Facility/Infrastructure policies in the Official Plan through the upcoming 5-year review exercise, which includes reference to the

Municipal Protocol for Establishing Telecommunication Facilities and any relevant findings as a result of item B and/or C, CARRIED.

C.5   Action Item Tracking

- Request for Information, if deemed the right path forward
  - On hold indefinitely
- One-on-one meetings with Internet Service Providers
  - On hold indefinitely
- Internet Speed Test Challenge
  - May 2021
- Installation guidelines for conduit in The Blue Mountains Road Allowance ("Variation Agreement")
  - Shawn Carey will bring draft staff report to Task Force prior to inclusion on Council agenda
  - Noted that Bruce Street Technologies is contemplating services in an area of the Town and will require a variation agreement to install the infrastructure
- Eh!Tel and GBTel Inc. Universal Broadband Fund Proposals

D.   Correspondence

None

E.   New and Unfinished Business

E.1   Additions to the Agenda

E.2   Items Identified for Discussion at Next Meeting

- May 5, 2021 Public Meeting preparation
- Internet Speed Test Challenge

F.   Upcoming Meeting Dates

April 28, 2021

G.   Adjournment

Meeting was adjourned at 11:42 a.m.