



Minutes

Rural Access to Broadband Internet Technology (RABIT) Task Force

Meeting Date: May 19, 2021
Meeting Time: 9:00 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 9:00 a.m. with Mayor Soever and Councillor Sampson present.

Town staff present were Chief Administrative Officer Shawn Everitt, Director of Operations Shawn Carey, Manager of Communications and Economic Development Tim Hendry, and Administrative Assistant Committees of Council Kyra Dunlop.

- **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 (April 28, 2021)**

Minutes reviewed and deemed sufficient.

B. Deputations

B.1 Deputations, if any

B.1.1 Devin Campbell, Plenary Group

Re: Financing for Municipally-led Partnerships

NOTE: Devin will be attending to answer Task Force member questions, but will not be providing deputation material

Deputy Mayor Potter introduced and welcomed Devin Campbell, Assistant Vice President of Plenary Group, and Catherine Jones, Plenary Group, to the meeting.

- Deputy Mayor Potter provided an overview of the work the RABIT Task Force had undertaken to date since June 2020 and advised that no funding has been received from SWIFT.
- Deputy Mayor Potter provided an overview of the challenges facing the community in rural access to internet.

Manager of Communications and Economic Development Tim Hendry joined the meeting at 9:10 a.m.

- Devin provided the Task Force with an introduction of Plenary Group as a P3 model based on long-term investments, and noted an approximate term of 30-50 years for pay-back. Investors included in Plenary Group's portfolio include life insurance companies and pension investments. Devin noted that many municipalities do not want to get into system ownership, and enquired as to the need for the municipality to own its own network.
- Devin advised that with the Town being on the cusp of 8,000 households, with anchor institutions and large agricultural anchor tenants that would put the Town in a good position
- Plenary Group typically invests in projects that are a minimum of \$10,000,000 to \$15,000,000
- Devin advised that to reduce costs that the Town should be installing empty conduit anytime roads or infrastructure is being revitalized.
- Director of Operations Shawn Carey noted that the Town currently has Access Agreements in place with providers, and that Variance Agreements are currently being considered to place conduit at the side of the road.
- Devin provided his recommendation for the next steps being finding out what a municipally owned conduit would like, that this information could be found without hiring consultants and that the Town should like at its own assets and capital projects.

Deputy Mayor Potter thanked Devin and Catherine for their presentation.

C. Matters for Discussion

C.1 May 5, 2021 Public Meeting Preparation

- **Internet Speed Test Challenge Interim Update**
- **Preliminary Data**
- **Quotation from CIRA for detailed Data Analysis**

Tim Hendry advised that just over 1,400 tests have been completed and that the majority of the tests seem to be on the shoreline. He noted that there have been some challenges with testing, being that residents are not necessarily conducting multiple tests and completing those tests at different times, and that there are very few tests completed by residents in rural areas.

Tim advised that he has received feedback from individuals that cannot complete the test because they do not have internet access at all. Tim advised that they will be adjusting their marketing to address these challenges.

Shawn Everitt and Shawn Carey left the meeting at 10:00 a.m.

Tim noted he will receive a formal quotation from CIRA for detailed data analysis to be provided at the following Task Force meeting.

Tim Hendry left the meeting at 10:01 a.m.

C.2 May 5, 2021 Public Meeting De-brief

Deputy Mayor Potter noted that the discussion went well and had led to additional information. He noted that they heard from Grey Highlands Chamber Stuart Halliday, who may attend a future meeting.

Councillor Sampson noted that the mapping of the backbone of the conduit infrastructure could be brought to the University of Guelph.

Mayor Soever noted that a feasibility study should be done and that the Town should use the analogy of water/sewer systems to explain the potential municipally-owned model. He noted that the plan could be developed by the University of Guelph project.

C.3 Municipality of Grey Highlands Internet Infrastructure Task Force Minutes

Deputy Mayor Potter confirmed that the link to the Minutes as provided is acceptable.

<https://greyhighlands.civicweb.net/Portal/MeetingInformation.aspx?Id=2001>

C.4 Action Item Tracking

Item C.4 deferred to May 26, 2021 meeting.

- 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
 - Tim Hendry to seek quotation for detailed data analysis from CIRA
- 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

- Sarah Merrifield to reach out and confirm status update on Proposals
 - Eh!Tel and GBTel advised that they do not expect to hear back regarding the proposal until mid-summer 2021
- R2B2 and the Town of The Blue Mountains
- 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

D. Correspondence

Items D.1 and D.2 deferred.

D.1. KVC Technologies Inc. Re: Provision of Rural Broadband

For consideration

D.2 Rob Uhrig, Sales and Marketing Manager, Bruce Street Technologies Re: RABIT Public Meeting

For consideration

E. New and Unfinished Business

E.1 Additions to the Agenda

None

E.2 Items Identified for Discussion at Next Meeting

- Variation Agreement draft Staff Report
- Quotation from CIRA for detailed Data Analysis

F. Upcoming Meeting Dates

May 26, 2021

G. Adjournment

Meeting was adjourned at 10:32 a.m.