



Minutes

Rural Access to Broadband Internet Technology (RABIT) Task Force

Meeting Date: June 7, 2021

Meeting Time: 9:00 a.m.

Location: Microsoft Teams Meeting

Prepared by Kyra Dunlop, Administrative Assistant Committees of Council

A. Call to Order

Deputy Mayor Potter called the meeting to order at 9:05 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, Director of Planning and Development Nathan Westendorp, Planner 1 Travis Sandberg, and Executive Assistant Committees of Council Sarah Merrifield.

▪ Task Force Member Attendance

None

▪ Additions to the Agenda

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 (May 31, 2021)

Minutes reviewed and deemed sufficient.

B. Deputations

B.1 Helen Hambly, PhD, Professor & Graduate Coordinator, MSc Program in Capacity Development and Extension

Re: R2B2 Data Analysis for the Town of The Blue Mountains

- Professor Hambly provided a brief overview of her background regarding her work on regional broadband research, her acceptance into the Ontario

Agricultural College in 2003 and her work specializing in communication and information sciences.

- Professor Hambly noted that the R2B2 program is Canada's largest and oldest research organization of rural broadband and advised that the University of Guelph has 5 people working on the R2B2 team.
- Professor Hambly provided a presentation on the purpose of R2B2, a data overview and analysis of SWIFT and M-Lab results pertaining to The Town of the Blue Mountains. Professor Hambly provided an overview of:
 - Summary of the quality of service from 2020 to current (M-Lab Data);
 - Service Providers (M-Lab Data);
 - Connection Types (SWIFT Survey);
 - Monthly Recurring Cost (SWIFT Survey);
 - Policy Brief.
- Professor Hambly noted that the Town is in the second neediest group of towns to receive better broadband service. She recommended the following:
 - The Town continue to collect data; and
 - That the use of a student intern could be of use to the Town regarding geo-locating the data; and
 - An economic analysis should be conducted for the Town to determine how connectivity can benefit and impact its' businesses.
- Mayor Soever asked how much effort SWIFT has put into collecting data and defining needs. Professor Hambly advised that at its initial launch, SWIFT had aimed for a regional perspective, and the dataset was not aimed at everyone having maximum participation. Further, R2B2 assisted with the survey launch. Professor Hambly noted that she would have preferred to have seen more datasets, and that having users complete surveys is a big challenge. She advised that the response level is really good at the regional level.
- Mayor Soever noted that the Town is in the process of doing the internet speed test challenge with CIRA, and so far the Town has received 1,600 completed tests. He noted that a lot of people have indicated that they do not have internet, which CIRA has indicated they are recording. Mayor Soever asked how individuals without connectivity are recorded in the data. Professor Hambly advised that those individuals are not recorded, and that connectivity to the premise is required to be included in the datasets.

Councillor Sampson experienced connectivity issues from 9:33 a.m. to 9:36 a.m.

- Deputy Mayor Potter noted that internet speeds and download speeds vary greatly in the Town, and asked how that might be addressed. Professor Hambly advised the following:
 - That having more fibre, especially in settlements areas, can assist;
 - That the Town should find out how many of its towers are connected to fibre.
- Councillor Sampson noted that the Task Force is notionally considering broadband as a utility, with the Town playing a role in ownership. Professor

Hambly advised that the Township of Puslinch and Township of Oro-Medonte are both examples of towns which have looked at in-house capacity for an individual who has responsibility for keeping progress moving on broadband. Further, it is important to get residents and businesses interested in the RABIT Task Force, and noted that local capacity building is seen positively by provincial and federal funding programs. Professor Hambly also noted that working with business planning specialists whose focus is better broadband service can also assist with strategy.

- Shawn Everitt noted that work should be done to identify a menu of opportunities for residents to access the internet they want in a range of types, especially in the rural areas. Shawn noted that the goal is not to look for one fix.
- Mayor Soever asked what the best way would be to map the infrastructure and potential users, and if that was something the University of Guelph could assist with. Professor Hambly confirmed that her students could assist with that, and advised that once the test targets were completed the Town should not stop there. She advised that the Town should set up user-targeted tests to get data, including from farms and the larger businesses, and then have that data geo-located to visualize it.

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

Deputy Mayor Potter thanked Professor Hambly for her presentation and asked Shawn Everitt if staff would prepare a proposal or staff report to proceed. Shawn Everitt advised that staff would report to the RABIT Task Force, and then that would proceed to Council.

Moved by: Mayor Soever

Seconded by: Councillor Sampson

THAT the Rural Access to Broadband Internet Technology (RABIT) Task Force acknowledge that staff will continue to work with University of Guelph's R2B2 program, CARRIED.

B.3 Staff Reports, if any

None

C. Matters for Discussion

C.1 Nathan Westendorp, Director of Planning & Development Services Re: Telecommunications Memorandum

Deputy Mayor Potter welcomed Director of Planning and Development Services Nathan Westendorp to the Task Force. Nathan noted that Planner 1 Travis Sandberg was also in attendance.

- Nathan provided an overview of the Telecommunications Memorandum, and noted that the Telecommunications Memorandum was a follow-up to a staff report that had been provided to Council regarding a Telecommunications Tower Infrastructure Plan.

- Nathan advised the Task Force that the Town may experienced an increase in the number of telecommunications applications. Nathan advised that in an effort to plan head, Town staff had recommended to Council that a Telecommunications Tower Infrastructure Plan be created, including updating existing Town protocols.
- Mayor Soever noted that it is important the Town develop a plan to deal with an increased number of transmitter locations being applied for. Mayor Soever noted the success of any plan would be mapping the infrastructure already in place, and that part of advancing any telecommunications strategy would be to hire someone with the expertise.
- Shawn Everitt noted that the policy work getting done is something that must be completed, and that the Town should make sure not to miss the opportunity of getting towers. Deputy Mayor Potter noted that having fewer and more important towers will make having them more palatable.

Deputy Mayor Potter thanked Nathan for the presentation.

Nathan and Travis left the meeting at 10:17 a.m.

C.2 Internet Speed Test Challenge Interim Update

- **# of Tests Completed**
 - Manager of Communications and Economic Development Tim Hendry advised that 1,700 tests had been completed, and that the numbers have stagnated with no new results over the last few days. Tim advised that all advertising had concluded, but that signage was still up around the community. Tim proposed re-location of the signage to areas with low participation in the speed test challenge.
 - Tim confirmed that he can get a press release sent out. Mayor Soever noted that Collingwood Today seemed to work well in getting the word out and that he would get in touch with Jennifer to discuss the gaps and get a story together.
 - Shawn noted it would be beneficial to get something to the June 17 Agricultural Advisory Meeting for committee members to get the word out about doing the speed test challenge. Executive Assistant Committees of Council Sarah Merrifield advised she would include a link on the Agricultural Advisory Committee agenda with messaging about completing the internet speed test challenge and spreading the message.

Tim left the meeting at 10:39 a.m.

- **Preliminary Data**
- **Quotation from CIRA for detailed Data Analysis**

C.3 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
 - Tim Hendry to seek quotation for detailed data analysis from CIRA
 - Additional outreach being provided via press release
- 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
- 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
- R2B2 and The Town of The Blue Mountains
 - Consideration of hiring a student intern from the University of Guelph R2B2 program in Fall 2021 to assist in data mapping
- Telecommunications Infrastructure Plan, updates if any
 - Staff are preparing a public engagement plan to determine areas of need and potential strategic sites for new telecommunications tower facilities in the Town

D. Correspondence

None

E. New and Unfinished Business

E.1 Additions to the Agenda

E.2 Items Identified for Discussion at Next Meeting

- Resolution to Council to continue Task Force
- Meeting Frequency
- Schedule meeting with Township of Puslinch

F. Upcoming Meeting Dates

June 25, 2021

G. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 11:08 a.m.