Minutes

Rural Access to Broadband Internet Technology (RABIT) Task Force

Meeting Date: **July 28, 2021**
Meeting Time: **11:00 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 11:01 a.m. with Councillor Sampson present. Mayor Soever joined the meeting at 11:02 a.m.

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 Correspondence – Ontario Bringing High Speed Internet to More Communities

E.1.2 Correspondence – Ontario Connects: Bringing High Speed Internet to Every Community

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 (July 5, 2021)**

Minutes reviewed and deemed sufficient

B.   Staff Reports and Deputations

B.1   Grant Street, Canadian Internet Registration Authority
Re: The Blue Mountains Internet Speed Test Data Analysis

Grant Street, Canadian Internet Registration Authority provided a presentation regarding The Blue Mountains Internet Speed Test Data Analysis. Grant reviewed mapping for internet speed tests before and after the challenge, for both rural, and built-up areas. Grant provided a summary of test results for Blue Mountain Village Area, Camperdown, Castle Glen, Craigleith/Swiss Meadows, Lora Bay, Thornbury/Clarksburg, and the rural area. Grant reviewed the 50/10 test results and the results where internet provision was less than 5/1, in addition to reviewing the ISED Reported Cable and Wireless Service, as reported by Internet Service Providers.

Councillor Sampson enquired whether there is a way to confirm if the reported test results match what the Internet Service Providers are saying is available in the area – Grant noted a drive map would need to be completed to confirm if test results are due to infrastructure, or an economic decision on the part of the property owner.

Grant provided an overview of the conclusions derived from the Internet Speed Test Challenge, including: most areas in The Blue Mountains need upgraded services; local solutions should be explored; existing funding opportunities are insufficient and take too long; the Town could consider a Public Private Partnership; a Strategic Approach is needed; there might be a possibility of partnering with a Not-for-Profit firm offering turnkey internet solutions. Grant also noted that i-Valley might be an option as well.

Mayor Soever enquired whether any of the current funding opportunities might cover costs associated with putting together a plan for provision of internet.

With respect to cell towers, CAO Shawn Everitt advised that the Town has participated with University of Guelph's R2B2 program representatives – the recommendation arising from that group is to ensure that any cell tower applications include fibre technology and screened to see if the company applying for the tower already has proponents reserving space. These types of parameters can be engrained into the Telecommunications Policy. Grant noted that there are companies that will build cell towers on specification which then allows proponents to add their technology to the towers.

The Task Force requested that Grant attend the August 9, 2021 Council meeting to present the data analysis to Council.

C.   Matters for Discussion

C.1   Task Force Report to Council Update, if any – Deputy Mayor Potter

Deputy Mayor Potter provided an overview of the Task Force Report that is being submitted to Council August 23, 2021. Included with the Report will be a motion to request Council to extend the mandate of the Task Force for an additional year. Councillor Sampson offered to create a decision tree to accompany the Report. Executive Assistant Committees of Council confirmed the Report is due to Clerks office by August 16, 2021.

C.2 **BAI Communications Deputation Scheduling Update**

BAI Communications scheduled to attend August 10, 2021 Committee of the Whole

Sarah to follow-up with Town Clerk Corrina Giles to confirm that adjacent municipalities are aware of the presentation, and also to follow-up with BAI Communications to confirm that deputation material is ready.

C.3 **Action Item Tracking**

- Installation guidelines for conduit in The Blue Mountains Road Allowance ("Variation Agreement")
- Conduit installation in developments
- Eh!Tel and GBTel Inc. Universal Broadband Fund Proposals
- Bruce Street Technologies – successful in ICON Grant
- 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
    - Will be funding request through 2022 budget related to RABIT activities
- 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

D.1 **Hon. Bill Walker, MPP Minister of Energy Re Phase 2 Natural Gas Expansion Program**

For Task Force Consideration

D.2 **Murray Costello, Director Enbridge Gas Inc. Re TBM Not Selected for Natural Gas Expansion Program**

For Task Force Consideration

Task Force reviewed correspondence items D.1 and D.2 – Mayor Soever will write to Province of Ontario and advise there should be consideration to install fibre infrastructure in communities successfully identified for the Natural Gas Expansion Program to achieve some economies of scale.

E. New and Unfinished Business

E.1 **Additions to the Agenda**

E.1.1 **Correspondence – Ontario Bringing High Speed Internet to More Communities**

E.1.2 **Ontario Connects: Bringing High Speed Internet to Every Community**

Finance to confirm if, through these funding announcements, the Town could cover the cost of internet infrastructure plan development.

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

- **Follow-up from BAI Communications and CIRA Presentation to Council**
- **Final Review of RABIT Task Force Update Report (being presented to Council on August 23)**

F.   Upcoming Meeting Dates

August 11, 2021 at 11:00 a.m.

Town Hall, Council Chambers (virtually)

G.   Adjournment

The Task Force adjourned at 12:26 p.m.