Minutes

Rural Access to Broadband Internet Technology (RABIT) Task Force

Meeting Date: **August 25, 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 11:01 a.m. with Mayor Soever present.

Town staff present was Manager of Communications and Economic Development Tim Hendry.

Regrets were sent by Councillor Sampson, Chief Administrative Officer Shawn Everitt, Director of Operations Shawn Carey, and Director of Planning and Development Services Nathan Westendorp.

▪   **Task Force Member Attendance**

▪   **Additions to the Agenda**

None- Item C.2 deferred

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 (August 11, 2021)**

Minutes reviewed and deemed sufficient

B.   Staff Reports and Deputations

B.1.1   Grant Street, Canadian Internet Registration Authority, Barry Gander and Terry Dalton, _i_-Valley
Re: Broadband for The Blue Mountains

Deputy Mayor Potter welcomed Grant Street of CIRA, Barry Gander, and Terry Dalton of i-Valley who provided a presentation on broadband for The Blue Mountains.

Barry and Terry provided a team introduction and noted the potential exists in The Blue Mountains for an open-access, community network, which is a network not owned by the telecommunication companies. It was noted that The Blue Mountains is underserved with its current internet availability, and lack of internet can translate into lack of healthcare, security, and population. It was noted that people are preferring to move to rural areas, provided that reliable internet service is available.

The group reviewed CIRA Internet Speed mapping data for South Georgian Bay region and The Blue Mountains.

i-Valley representatives clarified the six step pathway to community broadband networks, beint: demand assessment, detailed budget and design, consolidation of data and options for report to the Town, arrangement of funding, sign funding agreements, and provide monthly updates. Community-based networks have different goals than traditional telecommunication company-based networks. Community-based network goals include: job creation and innovation, new and staying businesses, quality of life, and secured/higher tax revenue. I-Valley did note however that telecommunication companies still have a role to play in community-based networks.

The design approach for community-based networks includes leveraging current assets like hydro poles to create a backbone, and use wireless in areas where fibre is not feasible.

It was noted that a Request for Information could be issued followed by a Request for Proposal process for community-based network solutions and/or a Digital Infrastructure Plan.

The community-based network is governed and operated at the community level and any service provider can utilize the network. Users pay a monthly usage fee. Community-based networks can be funded through Public Private Partnerships and Provincial and Federal Funding.

It was noted that a community network can be built in a decade in most communities.

Deputy Mayor Potter thanked CIRA and i-Valley representatives for the presentation.

C.   Matters for Discussion

C.1   Follow-up and Council Direction from August 23, 2021 RABIT Task Force Report to Council – Deputy Mayor Potter

Item deferred

C.2   **Telecommunications Protocol Update – Director of Planning and Development Services Nathan Westendorp**

Item deferred

C.3   **Follow-up regarding AMO Delegation with Minister of Infrastructure**

Item deferred

C.4   **Action Item Tracking**

Item deferred

- Installation guidelines for conduit in The Blue Mountains Road Allowance ("Variation Agreement")
  - Local installers experiencing locate delays – to be discussed at AMO Delegation with Minister of Infrastructure
- Conduit Installation in Development
- Eh!Tel and GBTel Inc. Universal Broadband Fund Proposals
- Bruce Street Technologies – Successful in ICON Grants
- 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 bring funding request through 2022 budget related to RABIT activities
  - CAO Everitt has follow-up meeting with R2B2 representative the week of September 13 and will be able to report on next steps after that point

D.   Correspondence

D.1   **MPP Jim Wilson**
Re: Government of Ontario Press Release – Connecting More Homes and Businesses in Simcoe County to Broadband

Item deferred

For Task Force information

E.   New and Unfinished Business

E.1   **Additions to the Agenda**

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

- **Next Steps regarding R2B2 following September 13 Touching Base**
- **Rogers Deputation**
- **CIRA and SBA Canada Deputation**
- **Items C.1, C.2, C.3, C.4, and D.1**

F.   Upcoming Meeting Dates

September 8, 2021 at 11:00 a.m.

G. Adjournment

Meeting was adjourned at 12:15 p.m.