



Minutes

Rural Access to Broadband Internet Technology (RABIT) Task Force

Meeting Date: December 2, 2020
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 Rob Potter called the meeting to order at 11:02 a.m. with Mayor Alar Soever and Councillor Rob Sampson present.

Grey Highlands Chief Administrative Officer Karen Govan was also present.

Town staff present was Chief Administrative Officer Shawn Everitt.

Regrets were sent by the Town's Director of Operations Shawn Carey and the Municipality of Meaford Chief Administrative Officer Rob Armstrong.

- **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 (November 18, 2020)**

Minutes were reviewed and deemed sufficient.

B. Staff Reports and Deputations

B.1 Deputations, if any

None

C. Matters for Discussion

C.1 November 30, 2020 Notice of Motion regarding Broadband Internet and Key Action Items - Deputy Mayor Potter

NOTE: the following Notice of Motion was carried at the November 30, 2020 Council meeting

Moved by: Deputy Mayor Potter

Seconded by: Councillor Matrosovs

WHEREAS it is vital that the best possible rural broadband internet service be accessible to all Canadians at affordable cost;

AND WHEREAS according to the Canadian Radio-Television Commission (CRTC), 40.8 per cent of households in rural Canada have access to basic broadband, compared to 85.7 per cent in urban areas;

AND WHEREAS The COVID-19 pandemic has shown us that rural broadband internet connectivity can no longer be viewed as a luxury. Farmers, medical practitioners, residents, students, businesspeople, emergency services personnel, veterinarians – in short everyone in the rural area – needs access to affordable, reliable broadband just as they need access to telephones, electricity and other utilities and communications services;

AND WHEREAS Council of the Town of The Blue Mountains deems it vital that local residents, farmers, businesses, emergency responders and medical providers have access to reliable and affordable broadband internet service across the entirety of our municipality;

AND WHEREAS several utility providers have networks of poles, conduit and other infrastructure to carry their services across various territories;

AND WHEREAS these providers are not required to pay taxes or fees to municipal governments for the municipal lands they use;

AND WHEREAS these providers collect and receive funds (a “Pole Attachment Charge”) for the leasing of space on poles situated on municipal lands at rates regulated by the Ontario Energy Board (Original decision EB – 2015- 0004) dated February 25, 2016);

AND WHEREAS it may assist in making Rural Broadband available to more locations at affordable cost if Internet Service Providers had access to, and the use of, such infrastructure at affordable fees;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Town of The Blue Mountains Rural Access to Broadband Internet Technology Task Force request the appropriate Federal and Provincial Authorities, as part of their commitments to expanding rural broadband penetration, to require that utility companies make their infrastructure available at reasonable or heavily discounted Pole Attachment Charge to Internet Service Providers where such Pole Attachment is being used to expand Broadband in rural areas;

AND THAT this Resolution be circulated to the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, the Rural Ontario Municipal Association, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and Catherine McKenna, Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, and Premier Doug Ford and Laurie Scott, Minister of Infrastructure, and MP Terry Dowdall and MPP Jim Wilson.

The motion is **Carried**

- Noted Ontario Energy Board decision and Ottawa Hydro decision provide previous decisions with respect to rental fees for hydro poles
- Noted the rates are set by Ontario Energy Board and the previous rate adjustment increased 100%

C.2 Finalize Details: Letters to Internet Service Providers and Public Information Centre

- Deputy Mayor Potter has compiled internet service provider contact details
- Letter to internet service providers to be finalized
- Coordinate availability with Grey Highlands and Meaford staff and council

C.3 Minister's Briefing Note on Broadband Internet, as Prepared by Mayor Soever

- Draft briefing note provides a history of SWIFT program, review of SWIFT projects to date, SWIFT's corporate governance model, and summarizes the projects in Grey County

C.4 Branding Mock-Ups – Councillor Sampson

- Councillor Sampson to follow-up regarding branding mock-ups and will provide additional information to the Task Force

D. Correspondence

**D.1 Jack Stepniak, Resident
Re-Broadband-Internet-in-Swiss-Meadows**

For Task Force consideration and response

- Deputy Mayor Potter to follow-up with Mr. Stepniak

E. New and Unfinished Business

E.1 Additions to the Agenda

E.2 Items Identified for Discussion at Next Meeting

- Open House Co-ordination
- Branding Mock-Ups

F. Upcoming Meeting Dates

December 16, 2020 *note: start time is 2:00 p.m.

It was agreed that the Task Force will continue to meet bi-weekly in Q1 2021

G. Adjournment

The Task Force adjourned at 11:43 a.m.