



Minutes

Rural Access to Broadband Internet Technology (RABIT) Task Force

Meeting Date: March 31, 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 Rob Potter called the meeting to order at 11:01 a.m. with Councillor Rob Sampson and Mayor Alar Soever present.

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 Notice of Motion by Mayor McQueen at Grey County Council

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 (March 17, 2021)**

Minutes reviewed and deemed sufficient

B. Deputations

B.1 Deputations, if any

None

C. Matters for Discussion

C.1 Rural Broadband Provision – CENGN Representative Kirby Koster

The following questions were provided in advance to Mr. Koster:

1. What is the relationship between CENGN and SWIFT and does CENGN see interest in this area? Although The Blue Mountains is within SWIFT territory, they have not been undertaking projects in this area at this time. Is CENGN interested in projects in The Blue Mountains?
 - CENGN receives funding from Provincial and Federal levels, similar to SWIFT
 - It is important that CENGN and SWIFT do not overlap on projects
 - In 2022, CENGN is hoping to take on additional northern and rural projects
2. What entities would fund a study to determine current telecommunications coverage and infrastructure in the TBM and to develop a strategy to provide coverage for the entire Town as efficiently as possible making best use of the existing Infrastructure. I can see this being a university research project (Phd.) or a series of projects, with the theme “Development of a Strategy to Efficiently Deliver High Speed Internet and Telecommunications Services to a Rural Community.” This could be a model for all of rural Ontario. Which universities and funding sources would it be best to approach?
 - University of Guelph has a program that would be helpful and would provide information that is useful when making funding applications for broadband
 - The Town is meeting with Helen Hambly of R2B2 (University of Guelph) to discuss further
 - Data accumulated through the Canadian Internet Registration Authority (“CIRA”) Internet Speed Test Challenge will be useful – the Town is launching a challenge in May 2021
3. What funding or equity opportunities are available to the Town if the Town wished to invest in the building of conduit for some selected areas of the Town, and then lease out that conduit space to internet providers? Are there examples of other municipalities where that model has been deployed?
 - There are opportunities for the Town to own conduit space, however, this model has not typically been successful in Canada because most Internet Service Providers want to own their infrastructure

Deputy Mayor Potter also asked as follows:

4. What types of tools should the Town be looking for to take to potential funding sources?
 - Many provincial and federal initiatives have made a switch to “shovel ready” projects with a defined and demonstrated need
 - Some service providers are looking to unused municipal right-of-ways, abandoned railways, bike paths, etc. to place small towers or trench fibre to smaller communities

Deputy Mayor Potter thanked Mr. Koster for his attendance.

C.2 Draft May 5, 2021 RABIT Task Force Agenda (Publicly held RABIT Task Force meeting)

- Communications channels
- Council approval
- The Task Force will take a report to April 6, 2021 Council meeting to request a formal Public Meeting on May 5, 2021 so that all of Council is able to attend

C.3 Action Item Tracking

- Request for SWIFT Funding for Provision of Broadband
 - Response provided by SWIFT
- 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
 - Report going to Committee of the Whole March 23, 2021
 - Outlines request for funding
- Installation guidelines for conduit in The Blue Mountains Road Allowance (“Variation Agreement”)
 - Shawn Carey to follow-up with staff report to Council
 - Will bring report to Task Force prior to providing to Council
- Eh!Tel and GBTel Inc. Universal Broadband Fund Proposals - Status
- Public RABIT Task Force meeting
 - May 5, 2021
 - Purpose is to discuss potential tower locations, importance and mandate of rural internet
 - Not advertised as a statutory public meeting with 21-day notice, but will be publicly advertised
 - Feedback received at the meeting will be provided to Travis Sandberg to incorporate into the draft Telecommunications Protocol

D. Correspondence

**D.1 David Mayberry, Chair, SWIFT Board of Directors
Re: RABIT Task Force Letter Response**

For Task Force information

E. New and Unfinished Business

E.1 Additions to the Agenda

E.1.1 Notice of Motion by Mayor McQueen at Grey County Council

- Mayor Soever advised of a potential notice of motion by Grey Highlands Mayor McQueen at Grey County Council to consider how all lower tier municipalities in Grey County may receive SWIFT funding

E.2 Items Identified for Discussion at Next Meeting

- Planning for May 5, 2021 Public Meeting
- Internet Speed Test Challenge

F. Upcoming Meeting Dates

April 14, 2021

G. Adjournment

Meeting was adjourned at 12:31 p.m.