



City of Columbia, Missouri

Meeting Minutes

Broadband Business Planning Task Force

Wednesday, November 13, 2019

6:00 PM

Regular

500 E Walnut Suite 103

I. CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Bruce Alspaugh called the meeting to order at 6:04 p.m.

Staff: Tad Johnsen, City Utilities Director; Adam Kruse, Assistant City Counselor; Mark Neckerman, Assistant Director of Information Technology; Christina Stock, Sr. Administrative Support Assistant

Guests: Ewell Lawson, VP of Government Affairs at MPUA; Craig Young, Sho-Me Technologies; Brent Legg, VP of Government Affairs at Connected Nation; Tim Arbeiter, Director of Broadband Development at Missouri Department of Economic Development; Mike Lodewegen, Manager of Governmental Affairs at Charter Communications; Levi, KBIA

Present: 5 - Bruce Alspaugh, Natasha Angell, Christopher Aumiller, Danny Paul and Sue Schaefer

Absent: 2 - Nicholas Knoth and Matt Kohly

II. INTRODUCTIONS

Mr. Bruce Alspaugh did a round robin for introductions.

III. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Mr. Bruce Alspaugh made a motion to approve the agenda as submitted with a second by Mr. Christopher Aumiller. Motion passed unanimously.

IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The October 9, 2019 meeting minutes were approved as submitted on a motion by Mr. Bruce Alspaugh with a second by Mrs. Sue Schaefer. Motion passed unanimously.

Attachments: [Meeting Minutes Draft 10 09 19](#)

V. MUNICIPAL BROADBAND LEGISLATIVE HISTORY AND UPDATE (Ewell Lawson)

Mr. Johnsen distributed a flyer titled *Frustrated with Broadband Service in Boone County?* He then introduced Ewell Lawson, VP of Government Affairs with the Missouri Public Utility Alliance. Mr. Lawson stated that the MPUA has a 22 year history with broadband and legislative issues. In 1997, Missouri was on the forefront and the 1st state to pass a ban on broadband telecommunications services. This was

challenged by the FCC and then went to federal court. The Supreme Court then weighed in and said no, the state has a right to regulate its political subdivision and is considered a subdivision of the state. Internet type services had an exception. In 2015, Senator Kurt Schaefer attempted to ban broadband services by municipal utilities. MPUA was involved in squashing that attempt. Cooperatives then got involved and rural broadband grants were initiated. The grant program contemplated that state monies would go to political subdivisions to provide rural broadband, creating a signal that the state was open to municipal broadband. This year, the Department of Economic Development was awarded \$7 million to implement the grant program. There are 119 municipal utilities as part of MPUA in Missouri. The City of Monet, Marshall, Carthage, Springfield, Rolla, Kennett, and West Plains are all cities that are providing some type of direct lit fiber broadband service at a retail level. The City of Lebanon, Fulton, and Columbia provide dark fiber leases. The City of Springfield has announced a \$120 million expansion to be completed by the summer of 2020. Mr. Alspaugh asks Mr. Ewell what he sees happening in the future, as far as a pressure to innovate. Mr. Ewell stated that he had not heard of any legislative activity as of now. Mr. Alspaugh brings up one touch make ready. Mr. Arbeiter stated that it is essentially, if you have an existing pole in place and it needs to be upgraded, the provider comes in and makes the upgrade. The pole is still owned by the City or another utility and is common in other states. Mr. Ewell then reminded everyone that the #1 purpose for the pole is to provide electricity, and everything else is secondary. Mr. Johnsen then ends the discussion saying that Mr. Ewell is the last step in resources for staff, as MPUA is used a lot.

VI. STATEWIDE BROADBAND PLAN (Tim Arbeiter)

Tim Arbeiter stated he is from the office of broadband development that was created in the Department of Economic Development. The primary focus is to help get high speed internet to rural portions of Missouri. \$5 million is in the budget for the development of broadband services and applications will be opened up on December 5, 2019. Mr. Arbeiter states that grant funds must go to unserved areas, or areas that have 10 megabits down or 1 megabit up of download speed or less. For Columbia, it could mean some potential in certain pocket areas. The program sunsets in 2021 and is 2 legislative sessions away. Mr. Arbeiter introduces Brent Legg, VP at Connected Nation. Mr. Legg stated that his company is focused on bridging the digital divide and that it is shocking that people don't have 10 megabits. Mapping broadband and infrastructure has varying needs and needs to be improved. Internet content should be carrier neutral and located physically. Mr. Legg stated he wants to close the digital divide. Mr. Arbeiter stated there is a broadband mapping issue and Missouri was a pilot for an experiment for Cost Quest. The test was to see if they can go to a location based broadband reporting for all the structures in Missouri. Cost Quest provided data and the key findings are found at www.ustelecom.org [<http://www.ustelecom.org>](http://www.ustelecom.org). The FCC is planning, within a few months, on announcing RDOF, the Rural Digital Opportunity Fund. It's a \$20 billion fund and is

essentially the Connect America Fund #3. Mr. Legg stated that Congress will probably intervene with and delay the FCC. The role for states and municipalities is going to shift from the state mapping from collecting data from service providers to data validation. Moving forward, funding through RDOF will be based on the national broadband map.

VII. PROVIDER PRESENTATION SCHEDULE AND CONTENT

Mr. Danny Paul asked the providers how big the service area is and where would they offer either high speed internet or other data services. Most Columbia citizens are dissatisfied with their current internet service. Mr. Christopher Aumiller also asked what challenges they face. Mrs. Sue Schaefer stated that there is 2-year-old data on mapping. Mr. Alspaugh mentioned contracts between providers and possibly getting a copy of one at the next meeting, mentioning that it may not be okay to distribute 90 pages. Mrs. Schaefer suggested getting a redacted copy or a summary instead.

VIII. GENERAL COMMENTS BY PUBLIC, MEMBERS AND STAFF

Mr. Bruce Alspaugh stated that he would like 2 providers at each meeting beginning with the next meeting. A list of questions needs to be prepared for providers at the next meeting, possibly being Sho-Me Technologies and CenturyLink. Mrs. Sue Schaefer will be gone for meeting in December.

IX. NEXT MEETING DATE

December 11, 2019

X. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 8:23 p.m.

Members of the public may attend any open meeting. For requests for accommodations related to disability, please call 573-874-CITY (573-874-2489) or email CITY@CoMo.gov. In order to assist staff in making the appropriate arrangements for your accommodation, please make your request as far in advance of the posted meeting date as possible.