

GRAFTON COUNTY BROADBAND COMMITTEE MEETING

3855 Dartmouth College Highway

North Haverhill, NH 03774

August 10th, 2021

MEMBERS PRESENT: Nik Coates, Brigitte Codling, Andrew Dorsett, Carina Park, Samantha Norcross

OTHERS PRESENT: Katelyn Robinson (NCIC)

N. Coates called the meeting to order at 8:18am.

N. Coates stated that the purpose of this meeting is to authorize the submittal of a NTIA grant application as a recommendation to the Commissioners, discuss a recommendation for the Committee's selected firm and provide a recommendation to the Commissioners to authorize to enter into an MOU with the selected firm.

N. Coates explained for informational purposes, that the NTIA, a federal agency of the US Department of Commerce, has a grant opportunity to apply for up to \$30 million. He noted that the project the Committee is working on would be roughly \$25 million. These grants do not come around often and the Commissioners have asked the Committee to do their best to find as many outside sources for funding as possible and this grant gives them the opportunity to have little to no impact to taxpayers. The application does require match components. N. Coates noted that they do get five (5) points if money from outside the County is put in. He asked the Committee if they want to recommend that the County put in some ARPA dollars or go for the full \$25 million. B. Codling asked if K. Robinson from NCIC thinks they have a solid case for this grant. A. Dorsett stated that they do, but ARPA funds will not be approved for use until it goes to the Executive Committee in September. The Committee discussed the possibility that they may not be able to use ARPA funds as the guidelines state that the funds cannot be used for grant matches. N. Coates stated that five (5) points on the application could make the difference if we have matching dollars. A. Dorsett stated that the match would need to come from an outside entity, as the County does not have \$250,000. N. Coates stated they could recommend to the Commissioners there be a match component from an outside entity such as CDGB or Northern Border Regional Commission. N. Coates stated that they could go to the Commissioners and state that they feel comfortable that they can find the match funds if the Commissioners wanted to go that route. A. Dorsett stated that this is getting permission to submit an application; the Commissioners are not accepting any money. N. Coates stated that the Commissioners would have the extra opportunity to decide whether they take the NTIA grant if/when it was awarded.

N. Coates stated that they could apply for up to \$30 million; the proposals from the RFP selection are right around \$25 million. He asked the Committee if they want to ask to apply for \$25 million or get authorization for up to \$30 million. N. Coates stated that it is a 10% match, or \$250,000. If the grant reviewers see the applicant putting in a match it makes it seem more competitive. A. Dorsett stated that the Executive Committee and the Delegation have said broadband is priority. The Committee agreed to recommend to the Commissioners that they want

to take full advantage of the program and based on estimates the project will come in around \$25 million.

MOTION: B. Codling moved to make a recommendation to the Commissioners to authorize the submittal of the NTIA grant application. A. Dorsett seconded the motion. N. Coates called the roll. C. Park “yes”, A. Dorsett “yes”, B. Codling “yes”, N. Coates “yes”. With the vote being four (4) in favor and none in opposition the motion passes.

N. Coates stated that the next item is to make recommendation for a firm to the Commissioners. Two (2) proposals were received from EX² Technology and Tilson. The Committee scored each of the companies and discussed the results.

MOTION: B. Codling moved to recommend EX² Technology as the selected firm to support the network design, build, operations, maintenance, and funding support. C. Park seconded the motion.

Discussion: N. Coates stated that EX² Technology was responsive and the proposal was thorough. He did note that in the appendices, they assumed there would be no performance and payment bond and that needs to be done. It was also stated that it was assumed prevailing wages was not required. N. Coates stated that will be needed with the application for NTIA. The Committee will need to have conversations with them about these items. The Committee discussed the proposal further and agreed to recommend EX² Technology to the Commissioners.

N. Coates called the roll. C. Park “yes”, A. Dorsett “yes”, B. Codling “yes”, N. Coates “yes”. With the vote being four (4) in favor and none in opposition the motion passes.

N. Coates stated that the next item is discussion of the creation of an MOU to enter into with the selected firm. The reason is that producing a contract overnight is not possible. They would use this to establish a working relationship with the firm. Work on a contract will come after the NTIA application in coordination with the County’s legal counsel.

MOTION: A. Dorsett moved to recommendation to execute a MOU with the recommended firm. C. Park seconded the motion. N. Coates called the roll. C. Park “yes”, A. Dorsett “yes”, B. Codling “yes”, N. Coates “yes”. With the vote being four (4) in favor and none in opposition the motion passes.

8:46am with no further business the meeting adjourned.