

**Tompkins County Council of Governments
July 23, 2009
Old Jail Conference Room**

Members Present:

T/Caroline – D. Barber	V/Cayuga Heights – J Gilmore
T/Danby – R. Dietrich	V/Groton – E. Conger
T/Dryden – M. A. Sumner	V/Trumansburg – D. Nottke
T/Enfield – F. Podufalski	C/Ithaca – C. Peterson
T/Ithaca – H. Engman	T/ Newfield – R. Dolge
T/Ulysses – E. Thomas	Co./Tompkins – M. Koplinka-Loehr

Municipalities Not in Attendance: T/Lansing, V/Freeville, T/Groton, V/Dryden, V/Lansing

Guests: H. Masser, Town of Enfield; L. Shawley, Town of Danby; D. Frongillo, Town of Caroline; C. Chock, County Legislature; J. Mareane, J. Kippola, M. Lynch, County Administration; M. Armstrong, TCAD; R. Driscoll, Newfield; C. Bartosch, Clarity Connect; S. Locey, D. Sanders, SMSI Health Insurance Project; P. Dougherty, Town of Enfield; D. Frongillo, Town of Caroline; H. Masser, Town of Enfield; N. Zahler, J. Johnson, Youth Services Department; S. Shackford, Ithaca Journal

Staff: M. Pottorff, Legislature Office

Call to Order

Mr. Barber called the meeting to order at 3:02 p.m.

Review of Agenda

No changes were made to the agenda.

Review of Meeting Minutes: June 25, 2009

It was MOVED by Mr. Dietrich (T/Danby), seconded by Mr. Engman (T/Ithaca, and unanimously adopted by voice vote of members present, to approve the minutes of the June 25, 2009 with the clarifications suggested by Mr. Barber. MINUTES APPROVED.

Universal Internet Discussion

Mr. Dietrich spoke of his efforts on universal Internet. He stated the Town of Danby has been pursuing this for a number of years and has put together some useful information. He spoke of conversations with Chuck Bartosch, CEO of Clarity Connect, about funding availability. Mr. Dietrich said broadband is falling behind in the country as a whole; there was a big promise to offer large amounts of federal money but that money hasn't gone out. He has been informed that a lot of money will be available fairly quickly but accompanied by what he described to be as an almost impossible turn-around. He said it was decided that if it weren't a great deal of trouble to support submitting a proposal it would move forward. Mr. Dietrich said rather than submitting a proposal for Danby alone he thought it would make more sense to submit one for the entire County.

Mr. Bartosch provided a brief overview, noting the following points:

- There is \$7.2 billion available in funding through the federal government; 1/3 is being distributed in the fall, with the application deadline being August 14; finalists will be announced on September 7th; final finalists will begin being awarded November 7th and all money will be distributed by December 31st.
- The federal government has no idea who is served and who isn't, the grant request requires the applicant to prove who is or isn't currently being served.
- The State of New York has published broadband maps and according to those maps, nothing in Tompkins County will qualify as being under-served. For various reasons, including map inaccuracies, applicants do not have to use those maps.
- The grant requires written support of the involved town; County support is desired but not necessary.
- Mr. Bartosch outlined ways to qualify as being under-served:
 1. 50% or fewer people in the proposed area have access to broadband
 2. 40% or fewer in the proposed area have subscribed to broadband regardless of what is available

Mr. Bartosch reviewed the proposal and said they are proposing to build a backbone from Syracuse down through Cayuga County, Tompkins County, Tioga County, and across to eastern Broome County. The areas targeted in the proposal are eastern Broome County, unserved areas of Tioga County, Danby, parts of Dryden, parts of Caroline, parts of Newfield, and southern Cayuga County. In terms of technology they will propose to run a backbone and will be trying to do fiber to the home where it is appropriate, as well as wireless where it is not appropriate from a cost standpoint. They are working with other providers such as Lightlink.

Mr. Dietrich spoke of the dire need for residents to get Internet access. He also said he thinks it's going to be important to have County and State legislative support.

Mr. Barber asked why Lansing and Groton would not be part of this. Mr. Bartosch said they haven't asked; however, one of the evaluation points in the grant is what the cost is per user served is and the more people that can be served the lower the cost of the backbone. Mr. Barber referred to the source for the sending out the signal and asked why existing power and infrastructure lines were removed. Mr. Bartosch provided a lengthy explanation. In summary, he said although it sounded promising it would have ended up being very problematic in the long run.

Ms. Conger asked if anyone had been in contact with Village of Groton because they are looking at broadband. Mr. Bartosch said did not believe so but said this process is moving along rapidly and if any municipality is interested and let him know he can include them in the grant application.

Herb Masser, member of the Enfield Town Board, said there have been quite a few concerns expressed at meetings about finding affordable broadband and he was asked to look into it. He has been in contact with Senator Winners Office in addition to a program out of Syracuse called New Visions. New Visions informed him that they have perfected the fiber optic works with NYSEG lines and have agreements in place with Cortland County and are working with Onondaga County and other counties. There is a bundling package of Internet service that is twice as fast as Roadrunner and 400 HD television stations for a total of \$28.95 per month, the bundle with the addition of telephone service is \$56 per month. He has been told the infrastructure is in place and they are interested in doing business throughout Tompkins County. Mr. Masser said Senator Winner is supportive of this and has access to federal funds

for this affordable service that he has been told would provide 100 percent coverage throughout the County. He said a presentation was given to the County last month and would provide information if there is further interest.

Mr. Mareane said he attended the presentation and said additional information is needed. He suggested that New Visions contact him to discuss this further. Ms. Chock said if Legislature support is being requested for any proposal a resolution would need to be considered by the County's Planning, Development, and Environmental Quality Committee.

Mr. Engman asked how the needs of a municipality would be determined. Mr. Bartosch said the easiest way would be for service providers to show what the coverage maps are. Otherwise, it can be a very time-consuming process.

Mr. Dietrich said high-speed Internet is a fundamental thing and asked members to support any proposal that would bring broadband service to the County regardless of the impact it has on individual towns. He believes the proposal that has the biggest chance of being approved and is the most realistic is the one spoken of by Mr. Bartosch today.

Mr. Barber encouraged anyone with questions to contact Mr. Bartosch.

SMSI Health Insurance Project

Mr. Locey said there are now 11 entities that have passed resolutions with over 2000 contracts and are able to satisfy Article 47 requirements. They are in the process of developing a note thanking entities for their support in passing a resolution and explaining the position on the Board of Directors that each entity will have to fill. Each will have to pass a resolution appointing its representative to the Board. The Board of Directors will be the entity that is involved with the day-to-day operations of the Consortium, will hire an Administrator, develop the budget, develop rates, hire a lawyer, consultant, service provider, review data relative to the Consortium and review any benefit or claim issues that arise. Mr. Locey said he will be putting together job description for the Board of Directors. He advised municipalities that they will want someone with a little bit of a base understanding of health insurance, someone who is somewhat familiar with collective bargaining process, has a financial background and understanding in terms of the development of budgets and rates. For most entities it will likely be the highest ranking elected official or the person directly in charge of benefits or the business operations of the entity. The first meeting of the Board of Directors will be August 31st. One of the first items of business would be identify who the Administrator is going to be. One of the biggest problems that has been encountered in speaking with the unions is who the administrator is going to be so they would like to resolve that as quickly as possible.

Mr. Locey said there are four key positions that will need to be filled: Chief Financial Officer, Secretary, Chair, and Vice Chair:

1. Chair – Puts together agendas, guides meetings along;
2. Vice Chair - Fills in when Chair is not in attendance;
3. Chief Financial Officer - person responsible to report back to the Board on any financial matters and key issues that happen financially;
4. Treasurer – The County has agreed to take on this, day-to-day accounting, billing and receivables, will regularly communicate with the Chief Financial Officer;
5. Secretary – Responsible for all agendas and minutes being distributed, keeps all of the records of the Consortium, gets announcements out.

Mr. Locey said although meetings are taking place with unions and teamsters, he said those entities who have not approved a resolution to join the Consortium likely haven't done so because there is a need for additional information. He asked the municipalities to let Jackie Kippola know who the delegate and alternates appointed are.

Mr. Dolge said he hopes Newfield will pass a resolution to join the Consortium, however, there are union and CSEA concerns. Mr. Locey said they have been meeting with them and they are asking for additional information. He believes once they get to the point where the administrator is chosen the unions will be much more comfortable. Once the Board of Directors is seated in August more detailed information will be available and he believes that will help open the lines of communication.

Natural Gas Drilling

Mr. Barber circulated pictures showing natural gas site development and oil, water, and sand that is coming out of the ground, and also one of a road being torn up by a drilling rig being towed by a bulldozer. Mr. Barber said the County is working through Ed Marx in the Planning Department on a preservation law. He has heard that Mr. Marx is on the right track of developing a very defensible law using the Association of Highway Engineers documents and standards. Mr. Gilmore suggested something be passed on from this group to municipalities that would help guide municipalities. He believes there is support by the Village of Cayuga Heights.

Recreation Partnership

Nancy Zahler said the Recreation Partnership just finished coming up with a set of budget recommendations for 2010 and it suggested this would be an appropriate group to explain what is being proposed and to also provide an update on the County's action on a recent resolution.

Mr. Dietrich commented that the Recreation Partnership is one of the original and best running partnerships that is currently running in the County.

Ms. Johnson distributed information showing scenarios of the 0% budget (loss of seven programs serving 325 youth), -3% budget (loss of 13 programs that serve 606 youth), and 2.4% budget (loss of 5 programs that serve 123 youth).

Mr. Barber said municipalities each have a representative on the Recreation Partnership, the Board develops the budget, and municipalities each state whether they will be in or not and in doing so they approve that amount in their budget.

Ms. Zahler said one of the provisions in the agreement when it was signed was the Chief elected officials preparing a budget each year are urged to use the proposed figure recommended by the Partnership Board as the starting figure in the preliminary budget. The County, City and the Town of Ithaca are the major funders. The process in the Partnership agreement is different than the County's internal budgeting process, which is driven by a target given to departments. Since the Recreation Partnership budget is managed through the County budget at the request of the partners, the County collects the money and pays out to the Ithaca Youth Bureau provider. That money sits in the County's budget in a separate account in the Youth Services Department budget. She said when her Department was given a 6.25 percent budget reduction target it also applied to the Recreation Partnership. The County Legislature at its last meeting denied a resolution to exempt the Recreation Partnership from the target reduction. She said it doesn't preclude them from asking for the amount and they will ask for the 2009 amount plus a 2 ½ percent increase and the merits of that request will be discussed during the County's regular budget process.

Ms. Johnson distributed information showing all of the programs that youth participated in in 2008.

Mr. Engman urged anyone who has questions to contact Recreation Partnership Board members and stressed the importance of municipalities sticking together; when one partner starts to withdraw it makes everyone nervous that it will fall apart.

Mr. Gilmore asked what the total budget of the Recreation Partnership is. Ms. Johnson said the total budget is \$545,742; the municipal subsidy is \$236,000 with more than half of the revenue coming from fees.

Cell Tower Update

Mr. Engman said the subcommittee continues to look into legal and technical issues relating to whether municipalities can pursue Countywide co-locations, thus reducing the number of towers. At the present time they are looking for sources to do studies. Mr. Barber said there are shared municipal services grants available.

Ms. Sumner asked municipalities to submit information to the subcommittee on local ordinances that cover tower or tall structure construction and an inventory of tower structures.

Water and Sewer Infrastructure Grant

Ms. Armstrong said they applied for the shared municipal services grant in 2007 and it was awarded in April, 2008. There is one municipality left to pass resolution which she expects will happen in August. The study will begin with information gathering later in the summer and early fall.

Ms. Armstrong also announced there is an economic development collaborative that includes anyone in the area that does economic development work. Chuck Rankin of the Village of Groton had volunteered to be a representative but does not have a lot of time to commit to the effort and they are looking for a second representative. Quarterly meetings are held where they discuss the housing program, water and sewer infrastructure, reinvestment act monies, tourism, energy, and other topics. The next meeting will be held in October and they would like to have more representation from smaller, rural municipalities.

Next Meeting Agenda

The following items were suggested as items to be included on the agenda:

- Update on application for universal broadband
- Information from the County on the gas drilling templates
- Emergency management
- MOU for dog control

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 4:35 p.m.

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Respectfully submitted by Michelle Pottorff, TC Legislature Office