

JANUARY 19, 2024

The Jay County Commissioners met in executive session on Friday, January 19, 2024, in the auditorium in the courthouse. Attending was Rex Journey, Brian McGalliard, attorney Wes Schemenaur, auditor Emily Franks, and Chad Aker, president, presiding. The purpose of the meeting is to receive information about and interview perspective employees per IC 5-14-1.5-6.1 (b) (5).

With no further business, the meeting adjourned at 2:52 p.m.

JAY COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Chad Aker

Brian McGalliard

Rex Journey

Attest: Emily Franks
Jay County Auditor

JANUARY 22, 2024

The Jay County Commissioners met in regular session on Monday, January 22, 2024, in the auditorium in the courthouse. Attending was Rex Journey, Brian McGalliard, attorney Wes Schemenaur, auditor Emily Franks, and Chad Aker, president, presiding. Rex Journey made a motion to approve the minutes from January 8, 2024 and the executive session from January 19, 2024. Brian McGalliard seconded the motion and the motion passed by unanimous vote.

HIGHWAY

Eric Butcher, superintendent, came to the commissioners to get approval for the financial commitment related to the January Community Crossings Grant. The county commitment for the required 25% match will be \$399,913.96 paid from the Local Road and Street budget. The match amount is based off the Milestone quote for the project. Rex Journey made a motion to approve the financial commitment letter for the January community crossings project 2024-01 CCMG. Brian McGalliard seconded the motion and the motion passed by unanimous vote.

An issue with Bridge 139 from the Indiana Department of Natural Resources was presented for commissioner decision. The 2025 project will require a tree mitigation plan due to it being in a 100-year flood plan. The first option presented was to have the trees moved and relocated somewhere upstream for an estimated cost of \$23,500. The second option was to plant trees in a specific area and report to the Indiana DNR for up to five years. The cost of the second option was estimated to be \$8,000. BLN will take care of everything after payment of fee. Rex Journey made a motion to approve option two for \$8,000. Brian McGalliard seconded the motion and the motion passed by unanimous vote.

Lastly, Mr. Butcher informed the board he will be resigning as superintendent effective February 22, 2024. The commissioners have discussed the soon to be vacant decision during the recent executive session. Rex Journey made a motion to appointment Robert Howell as superintendent for the highway effective February 23, 2024. Brian McGalliard seconded the motion and the motion passed by unanimous vote.

ECI REGIONAL PLANNING

Nate Kimball, assistant director, came to the commissioners to give an update on the Owner-Occupied Rehab Program. Kleinpeter Consulting has submitted the application to OCRA on January 19, 2024 and believes it will be approved the end of February. They will be sending a contract to be signed once approved. It will then be another 40 days until fully executed, estimated early April 2024. Rex Journey suggested to wait until the first of March after the contract is given to commissioners to release the application to residents. He worried waiting until April, contractors would already have their projects lined up for the spring. The commissioners agreed it would be better to start the process once the contract was signed by the county.

Mr. McGalliard asked for an update on interested local contractors. Mr. Kimball indicated the process was ongoing due to bond requirements. Mr. Journey asked how much work was necessary to meet the requirements and would it be worth the contractor's time. Mr. Kimball stated OCRA requires the contractors to have a Bid Bond, Performance Bond, Payment Bond and be registered and in good standing with SAM.gov. Mr. Schemenaur believed they should find out if the bonds were required for each job or overall. He estimated the bonds could cost a few hundred dollars per project.

Mr. Kimball will check with ORCA and Connersville for suggestions on how to handle the process. Mr. Journey added he would like to make this as easy of a process as possible for the local contractors. Mr. McGalliard thanked JCDC for their help in the beginning of the process to get it started.

SHERIFF

Larry Ray Newton, sheriff, came to the commissioners to discuss the MindBase application renewal. He presented an invoice for the 1-year renewal of \$7,500. The app is available to all first responders in the county. Mr. Journey asked the sheriff if the application is being used and by how many. Mr. Newton believed it was being used, but had not had time to review the analytics provided by the company. He would like to not renew the app in September, but use Brooke Aker when necessary. Mr. Schemenaur reviewed the contract which dictates the county must give 90 days' termination notice, which would be before the end of June.

Mr. McGalliard questioned what else the county had in place for mental health support at the moment. Mr. Aker agreed to speak with other departments using the app and to see what an agreement with Brooke Aker might look like. Mr. Newton requested the invoice for \$7,500 be taken care of by the commissioners for payment as it was past due. Brian McGalliard made a motion to approve the claim out of commissioners' contractual services account. Rex Journey seconded the motion and the motion passed by unanimous vote.

Mr. Newton updated the commissioners on the LED lighting upgrade at the jail. They have received the rebate of \$7,335 from Indiana Michigan Power. All Circuit has about 85% of the project completed and expects to be finished by April 2024. The three new vehicles are in and will be outfitted in the coming weeks. The assessor has expressed interest in possibly obtaining one of their vehicles slated for auction. Mr. McGalliard asked the sheriff if it would be a large impact to his budget to not sell that SUV at auction. Mr. Newton confirmed it would not impact his budget.

JEMS

Gary Barnett, John McFarland, and Kyle Gerlach, shift supervisors, came to the commissioners to give a monthly update on operations and an annual report. Mr. Barnett reported the main difference in their numbers were in regards to wages. The total collections were \$1,039,167.42 which was within \$1,000 from their 2022 income. Mr. McGalliard asked what percentage of fees are not collected by the department. Mr. McFarland believed around 30% are not paying their bill by avoiding collections. He estimated between 10-20% is written off by Medicaid. Mr. Barnett also reported the number of calls were down for the year, but the increase in fees kept the collections roughly the same from 2022.

Mr. Barnett presented four claims to patients who have made overpayments and are due a refund. One patient has contacted the billing company for a refund, but is required to go through the county as the payment was already remitted. The amounts were \$1,640.23, \$1,151, \$25.00 and \$86.87. The refunds will be paid out of the JEMS overpayment account. Brian McGalliard made a motion to approve the overpayments claims. Rex Journey seconded the motion and the motion passed by unanimous vote.

Lastly, Mr. Gerlach is hoping for an update on the installation of the power cots this week. Mr. Barnett received an email from Dr. Yazel from the state medical director after the recent state health officer visit. Dr. Yazel was highly impressed by the EMS education program in Jay County, specifically John McFarland.

HODSON ENERGY

Mr. Schemenaur gave an update on the Hodson energy solar project. The road use, decommissioning, and economic development agreements with Hodson Energy are in their hands with the county's requests. The council has already approved the abatement at their last meeting. The development plans have been submitted to building and planning, but the hearing has yet to be scheduled. They still had a few vacancies to fill with an organizational meeting to be held before a hearing.

APPOINTMENTS

Alcohol Beverage Commission	Terry Hanks	1 year term
Jay County Cemetery Commission	John Hart	5-year term
Jay County Visitor & Tourism	Jane Ann Runyon	2-year term
Jay County Regional Sewer District	Steve Ford	3-year term

BOARD ASSIGNMENTS

The highway department will be supervised by Chad Aker instead of Rex Journey due to staffing changes. Rex Journey made a motion to approve the remaining appointments and board assignments as presented. Brian McGalliard seconded the motion and the motion passed by unanimous vote.

JAY COUNTY COUNTRY LIVING

The commissioners discussed a draft of an ordinance related to establishing a permanent committee to oversee the retirement center. The draft includes suggestions from the current committee members. Mr. Schemenaur asked the commissioners how they would like to see the board appointment terms. The current draft has 4-year terms which would not allow some commissioners to have an input on the committee members. He suggested staggering the board appointments terms in the beginning or have annual appointments to resolve the issue. Mr. Aker suggested it be staggered with two appointments year one, two appointments the next year and three appointments the third year. The commissioners agreed to the purposed solution. The full draft will be reviewed for a decision at their next meeting.

YODEL COMMUNITY CALENDAR

Travis Richards, JCDC director, came to the commissioners to discuss renewal of the Yodel Community Calendar for \$4,800. The money is in the JCDC account from the Stellar Designation, but historically they have asked for commissioner approval before spending the money. There are currently 217 general user accounts. Mr. Aker asked how many views the calendar typically receives. Mr. Richards reported 8 total views from the prior week. Mr. McGalliard questioned who was responsible for updating the site. Mr. Richards explained Yodel maintains the site, but individuals are responsible for inputting in their information.

Mr. Aker wondered if there was a way to know if organizations were actively using the calendar or only updating once or twice a year. Mr. Richards was unsure of the metrics on the number of those updating regularly or entering once year. The app has made some changes recently that allows information to be pulled from a website or Facebook, making it easier to update. He added the effort put into it, is what you will get out of it, confirming it had not been going well for the last six months. However, there will be updates coming in the next few months that might make a difference.

Mr. Aker asked how Mr. Richards felt about the calendar only having eight views in the last week and if he felt the system was worthwhile. Mr. Richards concluded marketing of the county was something that needed to be worked out between JCDC and the county. He believed the calendar to be a good tool, even if they were not doing a good job promoting it. His opinion was to go ahead and renew the contract and then work on how to promote it. The commissioners asked how much money remained from the Stellar designation. Mr. Richards reported there was roughly \$29,253 left in Stellar monies. Mr. Aker questioned if there was any other use for the leftover monies and if it could be designated for something else. Mr. Richards confirmed the money had been used for marketing the county, but was not designated.

Mr. Journey restated if Mr. Richards believed the calendar was worthwhile. Mr. Richards thought the program was worthwhile and a good tool to not overschedule the community. Mr. Schemenaur agreed it was a good tool when organizations were looking at dates for events. Mr. Aker asked if Mr. Richards felt as though he had the time to invest in the program. Mr. Richards believed more organizations would need to invest in the project including Jay County Tourism and the Chamber of

Jay County Development Corp Board	Rex
Personnel Committee	Chad
ECI Workforce Development Board	Brian
Internal Controls Board	Rex
Jay County Chamber of Commerce Board	Brian
Jay County Regional Sewer District Board	Chad & Brian
Jay/Portland Building and Planning	Brian
LEPC (Local Emergency Planning Commission)	Chad
Jay Co. Plan Commission	Chad
Road Committee	Chad
ADA Coordinator	Brian
Upper Salamonina Watershed	Rex
Flooding Task Force	Rex
Commerce. He added it is really more of a community development tool.	

Mr. Journey asked how the calendar would work with Spotted Monkey Marketing. Mr. McGalliard confirmed they would work in conjunction with one another and would not be a conflict. They could do some posts about the calendar. Mr. Schemenaur echoed the belief the calendar was underutilized. Mr. McGalliard suggested the matter be discussed with his board of directors. Mr. Aker agreed adding an overall marketing discussion for the county needed to be had. The commissioners agreed the discussion needed to be forwarded to the JCDC executive board.

RIVA HOSPITALITY-FUNDING APPLICATION

Mr. Richards, JCDC Director and Paresh Patel, owner of Riya Hospitality, came to the commissioners to discuss a funding application submitted. The funding application was regarding money needed to restore the old Budget Inn Hotel located at 1411 N US 27. The company had already been to the Portland Redevelopment Commission who expressed concerns with the project being outside of the city limits. The commission hoped the city and county could work together on the project. The facility has an issue with their septic systems and would like to hook up to the city sewer for an estimated cost of \$65,000.

Mr. Patel is requesting \$219,573 from the county to create kitchenette rooms, remodel bathrooms, upgrade floor and improve the exterior. This is out of a total projected cost of \$383,573. The furniture and fixtures have already been purchased by the business for around \$50,000 and the property for around \$115,000. They have all the permits from the state and county to start construction. Mr. Aker questioned if the rooms were for rent or if it would still be a hotel. Mr. Paresh stated the rooms could be rented daily, bi-weekly, or monthly. He also confirmed there was no mortgage against the property. Mr. Journey asked if he had provided company and personal financials for the city's request as they were not provided in the county's request. He also asked if Mr. Patel would be running the hotel. Mr. Paresh informed them his partners would be running the business on a daily basis and had provided financial documents to the Portland Redevelopment commission.

Mr. Journey asked if the request to the bank that had been denied was for the same amount requested from the county and if his purchase price was his downpayment. Mr. Paresh affirmed both to be correct. Mr. Journey asked for income projections, business and personal financials and tax information be given to the commissioners for review. Mr. McGalliard asked for clarification on if the company was requesting a loan, a grant or a combination of both. Mr. Richards confirmed they were open to any offer, a grant would be great, but a loan would also be good. He explained since they had been turned down for a bank loan this would fall under gap funding for an EDIT loan. He added the city seemed open to doing something, but not sure what. The last EDIT loan from the county was IOM grain which completed payment in 2016.

Mr. Journey asked for clarification on whether the city would pay for the sewer. Mr. Richards understood them to be open to paying for the sewer, but it is typically higher than they would cover. The city would recoup some money through the monthly sewer bill, but the improvements to the building would not benefit their tax base. He asked if it were possible for the city and county to have a joint meeting to discuss what each would be willing to help on the project. Brian McGalliard made a motion to table the funding request until more financial information can be obtained. Rex Journey seconded the motion and the motion passed by unanimous vote.

Mr. Richards will provide the revolving loan application to the commissioners for their review as it might contain more information they are requesting for a loan.

MISCELLANEOUS BUSINESS

The payroll docket was presented for commissioner approval. Rex Journey made a motion to approve the payroll docket. Brian McGalliard seconded the motion and the motion passed by unanimous vote.

The claims docket for January 2024 was presented for commissioner approval. Brian McGalliard made a motion to approve the claims docket. Rex Journey seconded the motion and the motion passed by unanimous vote.

The clerk's monthly report was presented for commissioner approval. Brian McGalliard made a motion to approve the clerk's monthly report. Rex Journey seconded the motion and the motion passed by unanimous vote.

A claim to JCDC for items related to the office rented for Nate Kimball. The contract with the city has the county exempt from utilities. Brian McGalliard made a motion to approve the payment for Cinias \$11.81 and Gersh's \$140. for a total of \$151.81. Rex Journey seconded the motion and the motion passed by unanimous vote.

Mr. Aker asked Mr. Eads how the election workshop went on January 9th, 2024. Mr. Eads felt the meeting went well with about 35 in attendance. Mr. McGalliard thanked Mr. Eads and Purdue Extension for putting on the event.

With no further business, Brian McGalliard made a motion to adjourn at 10:47 a.m.; Rex Jourmay seconded the motion and the motion passed by unanimous vote.

JAY COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Chad Aker

Brian McGalliard

Rex Jourmay

Attest: Emily Franks
Jay County Auditor

JANUARY 25, 2024 JOINT SESSION

The Jay County Council and Commissioners met in a special joint session on January 25, 2024.

Present were council members Harold Towell, Cindy Bracy, Dave Haines and commissioners Rex Jourmay, Brian McGalliard, and president Chad Aker, auditor Emily Franks, attorney Wes Schemenaur, and council president Matt Mimnich presiding. The purpose of the joint session was to hear a presentation regarding county wide broadband.

MAINSTREAM FIBER NETWORKS

Nate Kimball introduced Mark Gabriel from Mainstream Fiber Network who specializes in bringing broadband to rural Indiana. The company was founded in 2006 by his son Brian Gabriel, in Nashville Indiana. They are already in 9 counties with 40,000+ locations (Benton, Blackford, Brown, Crawford, Floyd, Harrison, Posey, Warrick and Washington) and are currently building in three more (Bartholomew, Gibson and Pike). They are interested in providing a county wide solution for Jay County. They have received a major investment of \$22.8 million from Searchlight Capital in October 2023, a firm based in New York City. Mrs. Bracy asked the status of the project in Blackford County. Mr. Gabriel stated they had started out with a small project for businesses and county government as that was the county's primary concern. The project started in Hartford City with lines added up to Montpelier.

Mr. Gabriel explained the company's approach using five key principles. The first being to provide high-quality, reliable fiber internet service to customers. The second is to be focused 100% on serving rural Indiana. Their third principle is to establish a whole county approach to address the needs of all unserved and underserved locations in the county. Their fourth principle is to establish cooperative long-term relationships with middle-mile providers, utilities, and government entities at all levels to provide the best value to the customers. The final principal is to provide meaningful matching funds as required by these projects. Mainstream plans to minimize its fiber build miles by leveraging existing middle mile fiber from providers with local networks and partnerships with electric utilities that may have fiber networks.

Mr. Gabriel gave an example of a countywide partnership with Benton County in 2019. Their county was ranked 91 out of 92 counties in broadband access by the FCC in 2019. They partnered with their economic development, commissioners, next level connections round 1 and 3 with project completion in 2023. Their company would like to partner with the county for The Next Level Connections round 4 with an application deadline of February 9, 2024. The monies are anticipated to be awarded in June 2024. As part of the funding, there is a challenge program with 30 households Mainstream expects to challenge. A challenge is where they believe the current provider is over-reporting their service level to the FCC. He also explained the BEAD program (Broadband Equity, Access and Deployment) will be starting this year with 4-5 rounds of funding expected. The State of Indiana will receive \$868 million from the federal infrastructure law. This money could help fund those not included in the Next Level Connections monies.

The need for broadband in the county was discussed with 3,900 in Jay County unserved or underserved with 7,000 considered served. Mainstream proposes to build more than 395 miles of fiber over 2-3 years financed by Searchlight, Next Level Connections, Federal Funding through BEAD and local funding from Jay County. The total cost of the project is estimated at \$19.4 million. Mainstream and Searchlight Capital will fund 31% (\$6.0 million), Next Level Connections/BEAD program an estimated 49% (\$9.5 million) and a Jay County match of 20% (\$3.9 million). If the county were to commit for the 4th Round of Next Level in February 2024, they could start

construction by the 4th quarter of 2024. Mainstream must provide a standard of at least 100/20 (fixed wireless), with their current standard of 300/300.

Mrs. Bracy questioned what was needed to be awarded the grants. Mr. Gabriel explained a preliminary engineering plan of all the locations would be required. The estimated total cost for the engineering will be \$600,000-\$700,000 with them paying about half up front. They will also be required to report specific addresses, locations, and drawings for the state to verify the data. A financial commitment from the county will also be required for the grant submission. Mr. McGalliard asked if a bond would need to be in place before the submission of the application. Mr. Gabriel believed for them, it could be done on the backend. Mr. Journey asked if the project could be completed a few hundred miles at a time. The company believes it is better to do the entire build out at once, but the funding could be broken out over 3-4 fiscal years.

Mrs. Bracy asked the difference in the original 10-million-dollar presentation with a 2-million-dollar county portion. Mr. Gabriel explained the current presentation is a whole county solution. It would exclude Portland, as speed tests would have to be completed to prove to the FCC it is underserved. Once awarded the Next Level Connections or BEAD grant for Jay County, Mainstream will hire at least 6+ FTE Employees and several additional contracted jobs for the project. Mr. Haines asked if the majority of lines would be aerial or buried. Mr. Gabriel clarified about 80% would be aerial with about 20% buried. They will most likely attach to existing telephone poles in the county or install their own poles if required.

Mr. McGalliard questioned the timeline for county payments to be due and what was due at the time of application. Mr. Gabriel stated it would be after completion or installation. A full financial commitment would be due for the application February 9th, 2024. Mr. Aker asked if the financial number was subject to increase or decrease over the next 3-4 years. They agreed the amount should be set at \$3.9 million. Mr. Journey asked for clarification of payments and if it would be based on completion or even annual installments. Mr. Gabriel confirmed it would be based on completion, but could be hastened or extended based on the county's needs. The county will not be charged more for stretching out the construction period.

Mr. McGalliard expressed to the members he would like to investigate purchasing bonds to pay for the project. Mrs. Bracy questioned what would happen if they submitted the application without the county buy in. Mr. Gabriel stated the application would not be approved without the local support and proposal of specific financing. Mainstream would not submit an application in that instance. Mr. Aker asked if a verbal commitment would be sufficient for the grant. Mr. Gabriel discussed it would need to be in writing and include what monies the county would use on the project. Mr. Schemenaur explained it would be up to them as a body to come up with \$3.9 million. They could look at all options to make installment payments including windfarm, economic development funds, redevelopment commission or bonding. If bonding, it would need to be decided what revenue are you going to pay the principal and interest on it.

Mr. Journey stated if the county is interested in moving forward with the project, to make the financial decision on funding, it would take another meeting. A brief discussion on available funding including ARP monies was had. The remaining ARP monies will need to be committed by the end of 2024 and spent by the end of 2026. The first payments could be paid from ARP monies with the remainder to be determined. Mr. Gabriel confirmed they could probably get the full project done in a year and nine months depending on the number of crews to meet the December 2026 deadline. Mr. McGalliard voiced his support for the project, noting the schools are in dire need of the project. He asked if they could submit the financial commitment letter with options of funding including bonding or redevelopment commission funding. Mr. Gabriel believed two financial options could be listed for the application.

Mr. McGalliard stated with current elections it could be all new elected officials next year. He wondered if the county would be bound by this agreement or could it be change in the future. Mr. Gabriel stated if the county did not follow through on the funding the state would pull the award. Mrs. Bracy expressed concern with the short timeline. She would like to hear more from a company interested in expanding the east side of the county, that is not requiring any county money. Mr. Aker stressed the deadline for the Next Level Connection grant of February 9, 2024. Mr. McGalliard questioned Mainstream if there was any guarantee the money will be available again. Mr. Gabriel confirmed it is not guaranteed moving forward as the money is finite. Mainstream stressed their solution was county wide and would not leave the less dense areas with no service. He referenced Benton County as before the county wide solution they had created the haves and the haves not, leading to great consternation. The county wide solution eliminated that undertone within the community. Mr. Aker echoed the sentiments adding this was the only county wide solution presented.

Mr. Towell asked for confirmation this project would give everybody in Jay County high speed internet. Mr. Gabriel stated they will have service. The restriction for the grant only allows them to do areas unserved or underserved. Mr. Schemenaur explained most of the time the bond terms are 10-20 years, not 3-5 years. Mr. McGalliard suggested the extra EDIT funds be bonded over a 10-15-year period. Mr. Schemenaur stated the timeline of the bond would be a question for the bond counsel. He added bonding incurs other costs, such as attorney fees, which is more of a last resort, if the county cannot figure out other funds. Mr. Gabriel suggested some of the county portion could be in kind. As an example, REMC can do a reduction in costs the amount of money saved could be an in-kind contribution.

All were in favor of the project, but it was agreed the final decision would be dependent on the funding. Mr. Minnich questioned what the speed and cost would be for the included residents. Mr. Gabriel explained it would fluctuate depending on the area and type, but 100/100 should be guaranteed with a cost of \$55 or \$89.95 per month. Mrs. Bracy mentioned if the school corporation could help any towards the funding, as remote learning is a big need for broadband. When asked how the speed is maintained. Mr. Gabriel explained it is like a water line. If you want to supercharge the speed, they need to add more equipment. As an example, they will have 5-7 cabinets installed to keep the speed boosted. Mr. Minnich asked why the wireless is the more expensive option. Mr. Gabriel explained while it is cheaper to install, it is more expensive to maintain. The average lifespan of the broadband lines are 40 years.

Mr. Minnich explained American Electric had installed a tower and buried a cable by his residence. He asked if they find they are able to work with existing utilities companies or if they remain separate. Mr. Gabriel believed if they had fiber, they were probably already at capacity and would remain separate. They do have a great working relationship with REMC and are doing work with them in about six counties.

Mr. Gabriel confirmed it would be two grant rounds for Next Level because the state is only going to pay up to a max of five million per round. BEAD is the next round of grants from the federal government and would be applied for by Mainstream if not approved for a Next Level connection grant. The \$868 million BEAD program is totally federally funded, but is administrated by the State of Indiana. He confirmed they expected for there to be 4-5 rounds of that program. Mrs. Bracy asked Mr. Kimball, Community Developer, if he was aware of any other available grants for broadband. Mr. Kimball was unaware if there were small grants available, but Next Level and BEAD were the most prominent.

Mr. McGalliard questioned what percentage would be on a fixed wireless system. Mr. Gabriel could not give a firm percentage without engineering, but in Benton County it was about 15 percent. Mr. McGalliard also asked how many people per mile were needed. Mr. Gabriel explained the normal business requires 100 a mile to do a deal, while Mainstream averages 14 user a mile to make it worth it. Mr. McGalliard questioned if they believed a whole county would be more attractive to the grant process. Mr. Gabriel believed it would, noting he was unaware of any others offering a countywide solution. Mr. Towell informed Mainstream the county has problems with their police radios and questioned if this could offer a solution. Mr. Gabriel believed it would help the radio problem or could be worked into the project. As an example, they could prioritize fire or police stations ahead of others. Mr. Gabriel explained the next steps would be a letter of support for the project and a financial commitment. The joint session members agreed they were interested in the project and to schedule another meeting for discussion and final vote before February 9, 2024.

With no further business, Brian McGalliard made a motion to adjourn at 7:24 PM; Rex Journey seconded the motion and the motion passed by unanimous vote.

Rex Journey

Chad Akers

Brian McGalliard

Attest: Emily Blank

Jay County Auditor

FEBRUARY 5, JOINT SESSION

The Jay County Council and Commissioners met in a special joint session on February 5, 2024.

Present was council members Harold

Towell, Cindy Bracy, Dave Haines, Jeanne Houchins, Faron Parr and commissioners Brian McGalliard, and president Chad Aker, auditor Emily Franks, and council president Matt Minnich presiding. Absent was Rex Journey, commissioner, and Randy May Council member. The purpose of the joint session was to decide on a county wide broadband project.

MAINSTREAM FIBER NETWORKS

Mark Gabriel, Mainstream Fiber, was available at the meeting to address any questions from members of the board. Mrs. Bracy questioned the map provided at the prior meeting and the showing of white over the town of Salamonina. Mr. Gabriel explained the white areas were shown to be served by the FCC map which is used by the State of Indiana for the broadband program. Mrs. Bracy did not believe the area was served and asked the process for a challenge of service. Mr. Gabriel explained the state considers speeds 25/3 as unserved and speeds 100/20 as underserved. Ms. Houchins questioned if satellite internet would be considered as served. Mr. Gabriel clarified they do not recognize satellite service at the state level. Mr. Aker agreed to forward a webinar link from the Indiana Broadband program regarding the challenge process.

Jeanne Houchins asked what assurances the company could make to the county, as previous companies progress had not kept up with the promises made. Mr. Gabriel explained there is a contractual period of 24 months to complete the project to obtain the state grant funding. Their payment is also based on their performance and completion. They will be required to complete monthly progress reports for the grant funding too. He also advised the Indiana Broadband office will be out in the field inspecting the company's progress and verifying the reporting.

Mr. McGalliard asked Mr. Gabriel to discuss the payment structure per a phone conversation. If awarded in June 2024, engineering and construction would start 4th quarter 2024, with the first payment due in 2025. The remaining funds would need to be paid over a period of 36 months. Mr. Minnich questioned how many payments would be due in a year. Mr. Gabriel stated the county could make payments monthly or quarterly. The subject of payments was discussed with Ms. Houchins requesting some of the ARP monies be reserved for the sheriff radio project, as it was identified as a necessary. Mr. Aker believed a grant could be obtained towards the project. Ms. Houchins questioned if the \$3.9 million county match was a firm amount. Mr. Gabriel stated the price was a firm between \$3.8-\$3.9 million.

The possibility of obtaining a bond for a portion of the project was briefly discussed. Mr. Towell questioned if the project was something the county wanted to do before worrying about financing. Mr. Aker believed the project was something the county was going to need, if not already. Mr. McGalliard suggested the remaining funds required be paid from the Jay County Redevelopment Commission funding. He added the decision would need to come from their board. Ms. Houchins suggested the current bond be paid off and a new one obtained for the project. Mr. Minnich questioned the benefits of paying off a bond before creating a new one. Ms. Houchins explained she believed it would save money in the long run and look better in obtaining another bond. Mr. McGalliard also suggested they could also use EDIT funds for some of the payments.

Mr. Parr asked for clarification on the total cost for the project. Mr. Gabriel stated it would be a total project cost of \$20 million dollar. Mr. Parr questioned what the county was getting for the increased price from \$12 million to \$20 million. Mr. Gabriel explained this solution was countywide and should cover pretty much the entire county. He added there will be some areas that will be done later with a fixed wireless solution. Mr. Towell asked for clarification on pretty much the entire county and what would not be included. Mr. Gabriel stated they would have internet access, but not necessarily a fiber solution. He gave an example of Benton County where all residents had internet with 85% through a fiber connection and 15% through a fixed wireless solution. Their plan for Jay County will be similar with the percentage still undetermined as they are working on engineering.

Mr. Towell asked what the cost will be to residents for service. Mr. Gabriel stated the cost would be \$55 a month for 300/300 with a cost of gig speed for \$99. Ms. Houchins questioned if there would be an installation fee for residents. Mr. Gabriel explained a portion of the installation fee would be provided through the grant. They will also have 100/100 speed available at a discounted rate for those that qualify under the affordable connectivity program. Mr. Minnich asked for a motion to accept the project or adjourn. Jeanne Houchins made the motion to approve the project. Chad Aker seconded the motion. Mr. Haines added he believed this was a priority and an opportunity the county could not pass up. Mr. Parr stated he was in favor of the project, but would not want to deplete any county funding or jeopardize anything for the housing project. He believed the county match of 20% was a great deal for the county. A roll call vote was taken with Dave Haines, Jeanne Houchins, Faron

Parr, Chad Aker, Brian McGalliard and Cindy Bracy voting for the motion. Harold Towell voted against the motion and the motion passed by majority vote.

A discussion for how to pay for the project will be discussed at a later date to look into more possibilities for funding.

With no further business, Chad Aker made a motion to adjourn at 6:36 PM; Brian McGalliard seconded the motion and the motion passed by unanimous vote.


Rex Journeay


Chad Aker


Brian McGalliard

Attest: 
Jay County Auditor