

**WEAKLEY COUNTY, TENNESSEE  
FIBER RESEARCH COMMITTEE**

**Tuesday, May 14, 2019 – 8:00 AM – Conference Room, Board of Education, Dresden**

**Fiber Research Committee Members Present:** Commissioners David Bell, Gary Eddings, Roger Donaldson, Dennis Doster, and County Mayor Jake Bynum

**Fiber Research Committee Members Absent:** None

The Fiber Research Committee held the first ever meeting on Tuesday, May 19, 2019, at 8:00 a.m. in the conference room at the Board of Education in Dresden. Others present were WK&T Telecommunications CEO Trevor Bonnstetter, WK&T Operations Manager Stacey Riley, Commissioners Larry Taylor and Eric Owen, one citizen, and one representative of the media.

**I. CALL TO ORDER:** County Mayor Jake Bynum called the meeting to order at 8:00 A.M.

**II. NEW BUSINESS:**

**A. Election of Officers**

1. **Election of Committee Chairperson** – Mayor Bynum called for recommendations for the Fiber Research Committee Chairperson. Commissioner Doster recommended Commissioner David Bell to serve as chairperson, and the motion was seconded by Commissioner Eddings. Commissioner Bell stated that he would like to withdraw from consideration for the chairperson due to a perception of conflict of interest. After discussion, it was decided that no conflict existed and the group would like to see Commissioner Bell serve as chair. With no other recommendations and a voice vote, Commissioner Bell was unanimously elected chairperson. Mayor Bynum turned the meeting over to Chairperson Bell.
2. **Election of Vice Chairperson** - Chairperson Bell called for recommendations for the Fiber Research Committee Vice-Chairperson. Commissioner Bell recommended Mayor Bynum to serve as vice-chairperson, and with no other recommendations and a second by Commissioner Doster, Mayor Bynum was unanimously elected as vice-chairperson.
3. **Election of Recording Secretary** – Chairperson Bell called for recommendations for the Fiber Research Committee Recording Secretary. Commissioner Donaldson recommended Erica Moore to serve as recording secretary. With no other recommendations and a second by Commissioner Eddings, Erica Moore was unanimously appointed as recording secretary.

**B. Open Discussion**

Chairperson Bell began by mentioning monies available through ReConnect, a grant program available through the USDA. He talked about the stipulations of applying, including what entities can apply and timelines. He went on to suggest that since the Weakley County Municipal Electric System was not interested in partnering with the county where fiber is concerned, the county should partner with West Kentucky and Tennessee (WK&T) Telecommunications for researching and the writing and facilitation of fiber related grants.

There was some discussion of deadlines. WK&T CEO Trevor Bonnstetter spoke about USDA's ReConnect program and rules, and stated that the county is not eligible for the May 31, 2019, deadline. There was some discussion of under-served areas of the county. WK&T Operations Manager Stacey Riley showed a map of service areas that are said to be served with available Internet. He said that when surveying these areas, although the majority of the area may not have decent speeds or availability, if one person in an area has access, the entire application is no longer eligible. He went on to show the areas on the map that were eligible for applying as well as the areas that had already applied.

There was some discussion about ensuring that Weakley County applies for all available grants and monies, and it was established that Weakley County currently has an informal partnership with WK&T. Commissioner Eddings made the motion to recommend to the full county commission the establishment of a formal written partnership of Weakley County Government and WK&T Telecommunications. Commissioner Bell seconded the motion, and upon a voice vote, the motion to recommend the formal partnership passed unanimously.

WK&T CEO Bonnstetter told the committee that he would attend the full county commission meeting and speak about the USDA ReConnect Program, and show the full commission a map of the current service areas in the communities. He went on to say that with this partnership, when an opportunity opens, WK&T will already have the full commission's support on the application process.

After more discussion, Mayor Bynum explained that there will be a point when the county will have to invest funds into the partnership, and Commissioner Bell voiced his support for the partnership and WK&T. Mayor Bynum stated that the details would be finalized soon, and the entire commission can see the presentation by WK&T at the next county commission meeting on May 30, 2019.

### **III. OTHER BUSINESS**

None

### **IV. ADJOURN**

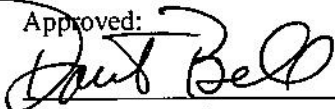
Having no other business, Commissioner Donaldson made the motion to adjourn and with a second by Commissioner Doster, the meeting was adjourned at 8:40 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted,



Erica Moore, Secretary  
Fiber Research Committee

Approved:



David Bell, Chairperson  
Fiber Research Committee

Date:

9-17-20