

**WEAKLEY COUNTY, TENNESSEE
FIBER RESEARCH COMMITTEE MEETING**

Monday, March 1, 2021 – 9:00 AM – Conference Room, Board of Education, Dresden, TN

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 Weakley County Fiber Research Committee met on Monday, March 1, 2021, at 9:00 AM in the conference room at the Board of Education in Dresden. Others present included Director of Finance John Liggett, Director of Schools Randy Frazier, and one representative of the media.

I.-II. CALL TO ORDER – APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Chairperson Bell called the meeting to order at 9:00 AM. Commissioner Eddings made the motion to approve the minutes of the meetings held on September 17, 2020, and November 9, 2020. With a second by Commissioner Doster, the motion to approve passed unanimously.

III. OLD BUSINESS

None

IV. NEW BUSINESS

A. DISCUSSION

Chairperson Bell began by refreshing the committee on the details of the active high-speed broadband buildout projects with WK&T. Mayor Bynum was recognized and reminded the committee about the most recent plan with WK&T that included the county's local commitment of up to \$10.5 million for the rural buildout of the unincorporated areas of Weakley County that have not yet received fiber internet. Mayor Bynum explained that some complications had been presented and he mentioned that there is currently no mechanism for the county to do what was originally planned. He cited issues that include new challenges on how to pay the vendor for services, state and federal legislation that authorizes local Industrial Boards to serve as payee in these circumstances, and the uncertainty of allotments through the state broadband grant program. Conversation deepened to include a recent Rural Digital Opportunity Fund [RDOF] reverse auction in which Charter Communications, bidding as CCO Holdings, was awarded \$2.86 million in funding through the FCC [Federal Communications Commission] to build out internet services to locations all across the country – including areas of Weakley County. Mayor Bynum told the committee that the FCC would allocate the funding spread over the period of the next 10 years and would service approximately 7,000 households.

There was lots of discussion regarding eligible areas, timelines, WCMES pole fees, lack of information, services and internet infrastructure anticipated, and the stall on the county's projected plan. Mayor Bynum told the committee that his office had attempted to reach out to Charter several times but had not been able to find a knowledgeable representative or one willing to talk with us.

Commissioner Donaldson told the committee he planned to contact our county's representation about the situation, including Senators Hagerty and Blackburn, and Congressman Kustoff. He said he would urge them to clear the path for our project as best as possible. Mayor Bynum stated that his office would keep up the attempts at contacting a Charter representative. The committee concurred that contacting representation might be the only idea at present, agreed to meet again once more information was discovered, and resolved to share any new info with the group.

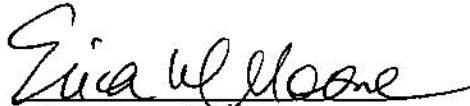
V. OTHER BUSINESS

None

VI. ADJOURN

Having no other business, Commissioner Doster made the motion to adjourn, and with a second by Commissioner Eddings, the meeting was adjourned at 9:40 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted,



Erica Moore, Secretary
Fiber Research Committee

Approved:



David Bell, Chairperson
Fiber Research Committee

Date: 5-11-21