

**WEAKLEY COUNTY, TENNESSEE
FIBER COMMITTEE**

Thursday, October 20, 2022 – 9:00 A.M. – Weakley County Board of Education, Dresden, TN

Fiber Committee Members Present: Commissioners David Bell, Billy Hazlewood, David Hawks, Roger Donaldson, Wade Cook, and Mayor Jake Bynum

Fiber Committee Members Absent: Commissioners Dennis Doster and Gary Eddings

Also Present: Commissioner Greg Usery, Finance Director John Liggett, Road Supervisor Jeff Cosby, Director of Schools Randy Frazier, Two representatives from WK&T, and three members of the media

I. CALL TO ORDER – APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mayor Jake Bynum called the meeting to order at 9:00 AM and called for the consideration of the minutes from the meeting on May 2, 2022. Commissioner Donaldson made a motion to approve the minutes and with a second by Commissioner Bell, the motion passed unanimously.

II. OLD BUSINESS

None.

III. NEW BUSINESS

Election of Chairman:

Commissioner Donaldson nominated Commissioner Bell. Commissioner Hawks seconded and the nomination passed unanimously.

Election of Vice Chair:

Commissioner Donaldson nominated Mayor Bynum. Commissioner Bell seconded and the nomination passed unanimously.

Election of Recording Secretary:

Commissioner Donaldson nominated Lauren Rush. Commissioner Bell seconded and the nomination passed unanimously.

Discussion of Current Grant Progress: Chairperson Bell thanked Commissioner Hawks for his volunteering to serve on the committee. Commissioner Donaldson welcomed any of the other Commissioners in attendance to serve on the committee. Commissioners Cook and Hazlewood volunteered immediately and joined the committee.

Chairperson Bell reminded all in attendance of the agreements with WK&T. Commissioner Bell stated that he thinks we have paid WK&T \$500,000 but still lack \$1.5M which was agreed upon to be paid after Phase I. Mayor Bynum stated that he thinks the agreement needs to be altered, which WK&T agreed to work with the County and County Attorney to work on changing that agreement so that the county can pay out the remaining \$1.5M. Mayor Bynum stated that the Covid money has to be spent by 2026.

Chairperson Bell asked WK&T about Phase II. The representatives from WK&T stated that within thirty days or so, everyone in the Palmersville area should be able to hook up to fiber. The representatives in the Pillowville area could possibly be hooked up as soon as the beginning of 2023.

Chairperson Bell asked about Phase III. It encompasses about 358 miles and 2250 homes. Engineering has begun on this phase, but WK&T is still waiting on paperwork from the state. Commissioner Bell asked when the map for this phase would be finalized. WK&T stated that we will have to wait for engineers to finalize everything, so it may be around the start of next year before it is finalized. Commissioner Hawks asked WK&T to look at Mt. Pelia Road to the Obion County line as that is where he gets most of his complaints from. WK&T stated that Phase IV will probably cover individuals that have not received service in the other phases.

WK&T informed the committee that the support from the county is essential to getting these grants from the state and spoke of a grant that was applied for in another county but was not awarded because of lack of support from county leadership.

WK&T stated that if the county wanted to commit additional funding, it is possible for WK&T to investigate hooking up houses that were across the street from Phase I & II grants. The cost to hook up a house across the street would be around \$1000. Mayor Bynum stated that we could enter into an agreement to fund this now, but that we could run into challenges in the future to appropriate the money as the future commission may not want to fund this project. The lack of knowledge around how much this would cost makes the committee hesitant to enter into an agreement. Commissioner Donaldson stated that we could take a chance and enter into an agreement and hope for additional grant funding in the future. Mayor Bynum pointed out that people who fell outside of the grant zones, they will probably never fall into a future grant area and so we will probably never be able to fund those with grant money. Mayor Bynum pointed out the frustration citizens experience when they are unable to receive service, yet they have fiber equipment in their yard in the right of way. WK&T stated they would be more than willing to match funds with the county to fund these houses that are across the street. Mayor Bynum stated that we could either commit an amount of money we are willing to put toward this or we could have WK&T go out to estimate (worst case scenario) the amount it could cost to fund this project. Commissioner Hawks stated that he would rather have a rough estimate so that we can attack this problem wholly rather than attacking it in parts. WK&T stated that the problem with getting an estimate is that they can estimate people left out of Phases I & II but there is a challenge estimating Phase III that has not been fully engineered yet and an eventual Phase IV. Commissioner Bell stated that potentially we should just address Phase I & II and eventually we will hopefully address Phase III "across the road" citizens left out of that phase and probably eventually Phase IV. Mayor Bynum asked WK&T to provide us with an estimate of people across the road from Phases I & II, Palmersville and Latham so that we can know the number that we're talking about funding before the commission enters into an agreement. It was agreed that we need to have a figure before it is presented to Finance, Ways, and Means, which WK&T agreed it would have within a month.

IV. OTHER BUSINESS

None

V. ADJOURN

Having no other business, Commissioner Hawks made a motion to adjourn and with a second by Commissioner Donaldson, the meeting was adjourned at 9:56.

Respectfully Submitted,



Lauren Rush, Secretary

Fiber Committee

Approved:



David Bell, Chairperson

Fiber Committee

Date: 2-13-23

