

**TOWN OF ASTATULA
MAYOR AND TOWN
SUMMARY MINUTES**



**COUNCIL WORKSHOP
TUESDAY FEBRUARY 23, 2021
FIBER OPTIC GRANT**

Having been duly advertised as required by law, Mayor Mitchell Mack called the workshop to order at 5.00pm. He led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Members Present:

Mitchell Mack, Mayor
Stephen Cross
Gayle Sikkema

Absent:

Kimberly Kobera
Orita Issartel

Also Present:

Graham Wells, Town Clerk

Present Virtually:

Fred Fox, Grant Administrator
Steve Elias P.E., Pennoni
Jeff Purdy P.E., Pennoni

Discussion on the grant application to the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity (DEO) for a Small Cities Community Development Block Grant in the Coronavirus (CDBG-CV) Application cycle.

A total of \$41,931,595.00 is being made available through a competitive application process to local governments who are eligible to participate in the Small Cities Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program within the State of Florida. The minimum amount a community may apply for is two hundred thousand dollars (\$200,000.00), the maximum amount a community may apply for is five million dollars (\$5,000,000.00).

The Mayor introduced the Fred Fox, Steve Elias and Jeff Purdy and handed over to Steve Elias to kick off their presentation. Steve went through a PowerPoint presentation and his report on the meeting discussions is shown below:

DEO Grant Overview:

- Broadband to LMI neighborhoods eligible, \$41.9 million State-wide, \$200k-\$5 million per application,
- Application tasks: (hearings, project description, timeline, budget summary, property acquisition, Applicant capacity to manage project, environmental review)

Planning Area:

- Concept plan is not required by grant, but is prudent to develop a realistic scope and budget
- Entire town to be serviced as a goal, depending on budget
- About 23 road miles to be potentially served in Town, which will drive budget/scope options

Discussion – Goals:

- Speed – FCC minimum of 25 mbps down/3 mbps up is outdated and not realistic, Town desires faster if DEO will fund (150+ mbps min download (initially) and up to 1 Gbps (ultimately) desired as possible)
- Business models – to be negotiated later/after funding award, Town is open to provisions for competition, open to cost recovery and service cost reduction to LMI neighborhoods

- Scalability – Town is open to including provisions for scalability (connecting businesses, critical community facilities, etc. as appropriate)

Existing service/providers:

- Century Link, Spectrum, Comcast, OpticalTel, Xfinity in the area
- OpticalTel ran fiber to Town Hall recently as a pilot project but not servicing others currently (news subdivision and church in near future to be serviced)
- Average download speed is very slow (20 Mbps +/-) according to the FCC database.

Existing Infrastructure:

- OpticalTel has line running down 561 to Town Hall providing symmetrical service at 100 mpbs, Century Link believed to have connection opportunity East of Town (Town to provide map of known connection opportunities to providers as possible)
- Towers – 2 cellular towers in Town and 1 Lake County – Town to provide known locations on a map

Technology Approach Options:

- Options to be evaluated 1) fiber to home (highest cost, scalability); 2) Fixed wireless (regional tower needed, lowest cost); and 3) Distributed Antennae System (DAS) (multiple small towers/poles needed, 5 G possible, medium cost)

Discussion/Initial guidance:

- Town prefers fiber to home if budget allows, but open to hybrid approach to accomplish goal of broadband to all/majority residents.
- Town would like more information on fixed wireless technology.
- Suggested to focus on highest density pockets first if budget limits.
- Price/provider competition is a desirable outcome if possible.
- Town is open to looking at multiple innerducts within backbone lines to accomplish future provider competition, facilitate cost recovery options, allow scalability and future Town government uses. Multiple innerducts may be needed to comply with Section 235 of the 1996 Telecommunications Act.
- Town is open to applying for the full \$5 million max; however, caution should be used as if the cost per customer served is too high then DEO may choose to fund another application that has lower cost.
- Future business model/negotiations would need to occur to leverage Town's ownership of Phase 1 infrastructure, this would be addressed after grant award as scope and ISP partnerships takes shape.
- Town desires a single procurement through and RFP for reaching an agreement with an Internet Service Provider. This project/grant requires providing internet service to the LMI community.
- Pending Bills in FL Legislature could remove some municipal fiber barriers, we should keep an eye on progress.

Next Steps:

- Provide some background data on fixed wireless technology for consideration by the Town, possible hybrid solution (Pennoni)
- Town to provide maps/feedback on:

- Technology approach (hybrid, fixed wireless, etc)
- Service areas identified by priority rank (number 1-5, etc.)
- Maps of known existing infrastructure (towers, nearby internet provider fiber, etc.)
- Critical Community Facilities to potentially be served (community center, police EMS, shelter, other)
- Continue preparing conceptual technical approach based on initial guidance at kick-off meeting (Pennoni)
- Continue preparing grant application (Fred Fox and Pennoni)

Fred Fox, Steve Elias and Jeff Purdy left the meeting at 5:58 pm. Council discussion on the options and likely areas of the town to be included in the grant continued. A date for the next meeting was set for Monday March 1, 2021 at 5:00 pm.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:25 pm.

Respectfully submitted,



Mitchell Mack, Mayor

ATTEST:



Graham Wells, Town Clerk