REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE WORKSHOP OF THE ESCAMBIA COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

APRIL 14, 2022

Present: Commissioner Jeffrey W. Bergosh, Chairman, District 1
Commissioner Douglas B. Underhill, Vice Chairman, District 2
Commissioner Steven L. Barry, District 5
Commissioner Robert D. Bender, District 4
Commissioner Lumon J. May, District 3
Honorable Pam Childers, Clerk of the Circuit Court and Comptroller
Wesley J. Moreno, Interim County Administrator
Alison Rogers, County Attorney
DeLana Allen-Busbee, Administrative Specialist, Clerk and Comptroller's Office
Anthony Bowens, Administrative Assistant, County Administrator's Office
Heather Mahoney, Official Records Manager, Clerk and Comptrollers' Office

Location: Ernie Lee Magaha Government Building, Board Chambers, First Floor
221 Palafox Place, Pensacola, Florida

Report prepared by: DeLana Allen-Busbee

AGENDA ITEMS

1. Call to Order

   Chairman Bergosh called the Committee of the Whole (C/W) Workshop to order at 9:02 a.m.

2. Was the Meeting Properly Advertised?

   The Board was advised by DeLana Allen-Busbee, Administrative Specialist, that the meeting was advertised in the *Escambia Sun Press* on April 7, 2022, in the Board's weekly meeting schedule.

3. Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag

   Commissioner May led the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

AGENDA ITEMS – Continued

4. Board Items

I. Broadband/Magellan Presentation

A. Board Discussion – The C/W viewed and discussed a PowerPoint presentation, which was also provided in hard copy, titled *Escambia County, County Wide Fiber Optic Master Plan – Engagement Overview*, presented by Kyle Hollifield, VP with Magellan, via Teams, and the C/W:

(1) Heard the following information provided by Mr. Hollifield:

- The object of the plan created by Magellan is to encourage Internet Service Providers (ISPs) to provide services to customers, and they do not recommend that Escambia County becomes a retail provider of internet services.
- At least 3,000 households in northern Escambia County have little to no connectivity, which was a huge problem during COVID and continues to be a problem now.
- While the company is a firm believer in fiber optics, due to the need to get connected as quickly and cheaply as possible, there was a wireless element involved in the plan.
- Magellan has no relationship with any vendors and would not make any money on Escambia County building infrastructure unless they were chosen as project managers.
- The State of Florida has $400 million in the coffers from American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding for broadband, but the funds have not yet been released.
- Magellan provides turnkey broadband services from planning, to design engineering, to implementation, to assistance with funding and grants.
- The old definition of broadband was 25 mbps download speed and 3 mbps upload speed, but that is expected to change with federal funding.

(2) Heard Mr. Hollifield's review of the project background, broadband goals, and recommendations, as provided in the agenda backup;

(3) Was provided the following additional information by Mr. Hollifield:

- According to the January 2021 feasibility cost estimates, Escambia County's estimated capital cost was $22.9 million.
- The conceptual network included 185 fiber miles and 97 network connections, which would connect all County facilities, community centers, and County parks, while also providing wireless to 3,000 underserved residents.

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AGENDA ITEMS – Continued

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- In mid-2021, Escambia County accepted the results of the Broadband Feasibility Study and authorized ARPA funding of design engineering based on conceptual design.
- A more detailed business plan and refinement of cost with bill of material required to be “shovel ready” were also authorized and delivered.
- Network design elements include equipment locations and requirements, placement of fiber distribution hubs, sizes, and quantities, among other elements provided in the backup slides.
- The completed network design includes 132 miles of fiber, connects 127 County facilities, aligns with FDOT’s fiber route for approximately 42 miles, has the ability to connect with Pensacola sites, and provides connectivity to beach front, I-10 to Santa Rosa, and Gulf Breeze.
- The total estimated network cost is $32.6 million and construction cost is $29.2 million.
- There were cost changes from the feasibility study to the design engineering due to inflation and huge increases in costs of construction materials.
- The estimated total annual network operations and maintenance expense is $836,000.
- County-owned services would have many benefits, including having 100% fiber and being 100% underground.
- Several business model options were considered, with the recommended model being “Dark Fiber Monthly or Annual Leasing” based on a per fiber mile basis.
- Using this leasing model, the estimated annual revenue (based on 100 miles of leased fiber) would be $414,000.
- Final deliverables provided in January 2022 included delivering a “shovel ready” construction package, a bill of materials and specifications, a step-by-step operations plan and business plan, and sample construction RFPs (requests for proposals).
- Next steps include approving project funding, issuing an RFP for project/construction management services, issuing an RFP for construction services of the approximately 220 miles of fiber, issuing an RFP to potential vendors to provide services over the county fiber backbone network, and issuing an RFP for ISPs and large users to lease Dark Fiber off of the backbone.

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         (4) Viewed GIS models of the proposed network presented by County IT Director Bart Siders and Magellan GIS Analyst Cole Henkle;

         (5) In response to inquiry from Commissioner Underhill, was advised by Mr. Hollifield that his company recommends the Dark Fiber Leasing business model approximately 40-50% of the time and that he believes this model can be effectively run with four full-time employees;

         (6) Discussed potential risks to the proposed business model and the 18-month time frame to install fiber;

         (7) Heard comments of support for the project from Ed Carson, First Place Partners, and Representative Michelle Salzman; and

         (8) Heard comments from Commissioner Barry regarding the previous discussion from the April 7th Regular BCC meeting, and was advised that he will work with Director Siders and Kristin Hual, Deputy County Attorney, to bring an RFP back to the Board as soon as possible; and

      B. Board Direction – None.

      Speaker(s)

      Kristin Longley

AGENDA ITEMS – Continued

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II. Medical Malpractice Liability Insurance

A. Board Discussion – The C/W:

(1) Was advised by Mark Bartlett, Risk Manager, that:

- Two years ago, when the County's medical malpractice liability insurance came up for renewal, the premium was exorbitant and staff could not recommend going that route; instead, the County went to a self-insured model.
- While the proposed premium has now come down, the deductible has gone up to $250,000 per claim and staff does not recommend this option.
- Under the self-insured model, twice the amount of claims per year is put back, and for the last three years, there have been no claims and no money has been paid out for medical malpractice.
- Staff recommends that the County remain self-insured.

(2) Was advised by County Attorney Alison Rogers that medical malpractice is a torte under Florida law, and that generally speaking sovereign immunity caps do apply; however, there is the rare exception of a matter being so egregious that the County ended up with a civil rights claim in federal court; and

(3) Was advised by Commissioner Bender that as long as the County is doing its job of managing the plan by managing cases and either getting ahead of claims or not having them, remaining self-insured continues to be the best option; and

B. Board Direction – None.

III. Homeless Discussion

A. Board Discussion – The C/W:

(1) Was advised by Interim County Administrator Moreno that staff added this Item to the agenda so that the Board could begin a robust discussion on the issue and develop a strategy moving forward to spend the $4 million allocated from American Rescue Plan Act funds;

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(2) Was advised by Sandra Donaldson, Chief Advocacy Officer, Community Health Northwest Florida, that:

- Community Health Northwest Florida is a federally qualifying healthcare center and provides medical and social outreach for the homeless.
- The organization has rolled out a medical van under I-110 and also serves the Alfred-Washburn Center, Bright Bridges, and any other locations needed to serve the homeless.
- Approximately 73% of homeless citizens served are between 18 and 64 years old and there are also a significant number of children that are homeless.
- The organization has served about 5,200 homeless patients.
- Community Health has substance abuse advisors and offers a wide range of social services, including utilizing licensed social workers, to help bring stability for those with issues such as addiction and substance abuse.
- The organization also partners with Health and Hope clinic, among others, to provide mutual referrals as needed.
- A services gap analysis is recommended to identify needs and Community Health continues to work to help manage chronic diseases, store medication, and address issues holistically with homelessness.

(3) Was advised by Commissioner May that some data points include that 28% of homeless individuals have mental health issues, and other issues include chronic illnesses such as hypertension and diabetes and that he supports using the funding available to create sustainable solutions to homelessness;

(4) Heard comments from Commissioner Bender regarding overdoses being tracked on the EMS dashboard and heard comments from Commissioner May regarding the need for a comprehensive plan and opportunities for prevention, as well as his support for a gap analysis;

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AGENDA ITEMS – Continued

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(5) Was advised by Travis Thompkins, Emergency Management and homeless minister, that:

- There are many families who are homeless, but there are few resources for families and no bridge housing to help stabilize them.
- An organization called Family Promise is one that assists homeless families and partners with United Ministries and is starting to get off the ground in our area.
- Supportive services are needed, such as mental health treatment and substance abuse treatment and there is no doubt that drug addiction leads to homelessness.

(6) Was advised by Michael Kimberl, Alfred-Washburn Center and Satoshi Forest co-founder, that:

- He specializes in street-level homelessness and that a lot of his organization's success comes from volunteerism, which keeps costs down, but also has pros and cons to the model.
- His organization is currently funded by private donations and Satoshi Forest functions on about $15,000 per year.
- The majority of people served are long-term Escambia County residents, and the Washburn Center helps to point those in need in the direction of service providers who can help.

(7) Discussed Mr. Kimberl's success with Satoshi Forest and knowledge of the issues of homelessness in the community; also discussed how cases are managed, the impact of removing people who were living under the bridge downtown, and the need for impacts to be sustainable and help the people who most need it;

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(8) Heard comments from Vinnie Whibbs, Executive Director of Re-Entry Alliance, that:

- A safe outdoor space, known as Camp 1, was opened up behind Pathways for Change and has about 32 people there.
- Two case managers serve the people at Camp 1 with the idea that it is a transitional location.
- If citizens are not locals and have family elsewhere that can help them and provide support, they are assisted in getting home.
- The cost to support the 32 people is approximately $42,000 with the majority going to washing stations, portable toilets, and two case managers.
- His organization has opened up a 52-bed shelter for women and children, which is currently near capacity with about 46 people in residence.

(9) Was advised by Commissioner Bender that, as this is one-time money, he supports a plan for long-term impact, and looking at what infrastructure can be set up that can be operated by capable entities;

(10) Heard comments from Donna Jacobi-Prewitt regarding the importance of helping families experiencing homelessness and to break the cycle for children so that they do not end up on the same path; and

(11) Discussed the need for long-term, holistic, sustainable impacts for the funding and agreed to continue conversations as well as to schedule a joint meeting with the City on the issue; and

B. Board Direction – None.

AGENDA ITEMS – Continued

4. Continued…

IV. America's Cup Training Initiative

A. Board Discussion – The C/W reviewed and discussed handouts provided by Tom Pace, Jr., Commodore, Pensacola Yacht Club, and Collier Merrill, Merrill Land Company, and the C/W:

(1) Was advised by Mr. Pace that:

- The America's Cup is the pinnacle of sailing in the world and predates the modern Olympics.
- American Magic, a yacht racing team, which trained in Pensacola in 2018 and 2019, will be competing in the 37th America's Cup in Madrid, and the proposal is to create a Pensacola Development and Training Center to establish Pensacola as a base for training in the United States.
- The estimated economic impact of the proposal is $8,768,835, which includes salary and wages, lodging and housing, and travel.
- The team described Pensacola Bay as a perfect training location and body of water and would train from May of 2022 through July of 2023 before making the journey to Spain to compete.

(2) Heard comments from Mr. Merrill supporting the project and how he views it as a long-term plan to put Pensacola back on the map; heard further comments regarding sailing being the richest sport in the world as well as a clean industry, and other support being sought, such as from Visit Florida and Visit Pensacola, and possibly Triumph for future infrastructure; and

(3) Discussed the monetary request and potential economic impact, how Tourist Development Tax dollars might be used for the request, how Pensacola Bay could be promoted with the proposal, as well as the possibility for hosting a future America's Cup; and

B. Board Direction – None.

5. Adjourn

Chairman Bergosh declared the C/W Workshop adjourned at 11:32 a.m.