

Benzie County BRA/EDC Meeting

Friday February 15, 2019

Present: B. Brooks, C. Gillison, R. Griner, A. Jeannot and E. Kowalski

Absent: M. Carroll and R. Russell

Also Present: Gary Sauer, Betsy Evans, Chris Vander, Lisa Leedy and Susan Boyd

Meeting called to order by Chair Kowalski at 11:03 a.m.

Approval of Agenda: Motion by C. Gillison, second by R. Griner to approve agenda as presented. Motion approved.

Approval of January 24, 2019 Minutes: Motion by R. Griner, second by A. Jeannot. Motion approved.

Public Input: No public input

Broadband RFP Discussion: Discussion of Proposal submitted by AES at request of subcommittee. Submission of a proposal rather than RFP was questioned. L. Leedy explained that she was responding to a request for a proposal to include writing RFP which requires a lot of research in order to lay the groundwork for a relevant RFP. Requires fact finding to clarify ownership options and areas to be addressed. Interpretation on the part of subcommittee was for a more general outline for an RFP that would include much of the tasks presented in the proposal and the work would be done in advance of benefiting from any expertise to be gained through RFP. L. Leedy explained that proposal was for gathering information for direction of RFP and not resolving all issues prior. Other comments included that since the proposal was for \$25,000, it would have to be put out for bid, that the price was too much for intangibles, and that the RFP address deliverables and allocation of responsibilities between county and private entities. Further discussion will be postponed until the next meeting. Proposal will be evaluated and summarized by subcommittee for presentation at the next board meeting. Any documents from the services contracted from Cherry Capital Connection in 2007 are to be evaluated for usefulness as well. A. Jeannot announced that Paula Figura had been approved as a member of the board and with her strong technical background it was suggested that she also be on the broadband subcommittee.

AES Update on Project and Billings: Invoice dated 02/13/19 submitted by AES does not include enough detail/clarification of services provided. More detail about retention visits and any follow up meetings was requested. L. Leedy explained that the billing corresponded to the contract and the workplan, which is why invoiced by line items and associated contract price. Future projects can be billed with hourly rates if that is the preference. Two retention visits were done and both had follow up visits. This task becomes time consuming with subsequent visits. At some point AES services become business consulting services and the cost should be borne by the business rather than the county. More information about retention visits was requested: who was visited and the general outcome. Further questions about Thompsonville work listed on invoice which was added to workplan at later date. Motion by A. Jeannot, second by C. Gillison to pay AES invoice in the amount of \$5,067.50. Motion

approved. Future minutes need to include more detail on scope of work expected from AES and ongoing status of current projects.

New Business/Old Business: L. Leedy provided update on grant application for sewer feasibility study. Initial reluctance on part of Villages of Beulah and Benzonia to consolidate efforts. Grant from Michigan Department of Agriculture was applied for under AES with notification of awards in April 2019. L. Leedy stated that the grant was written in general terms in order to encompass broad infrastructure needs so it may be less likely to be awarded. Motion by A. Jeannot, second by B. Brooks that AES take no further action on this project until the result of the grant application is known. Motion approved. Grant application will be provided to board for review. Motion by A. Jeannot, second by C. Gillison to direct County Administrator to draft a new contract with AES to be reviewed at next meeting. Motion approved.

Other: R. Griner suggested that since Representative Jack O'Malley had been appointed chair of the state Transportation Committee that he be invited to attend a future board meeting and provide updates on issues including a transloader facility and corridor development. Support for extending invitation was voiced. E. Kowalski will contact Representative O'Malley's office to coordinate. Subcommittee for seasonal workforce housing has not yet met. A. Jeannot said that a local hotel had recently been sold and the new owners will possibly do month to month leases for 24-26 units. Will clarify plans before subcommittee meets.

Public Input: Betsy Evans expressed support for L. Leedy's presentation of Broadband RFP due to complexity of the project. Suggested that board needs more clarity in expectations of AES. New contract should better address direction and scope of work. Mentioned that in past experience with Beulah and Benzonia Townships she had never noticed animosity and that all parties had worked well together. Should reach out to Amazon since plans for establishing headquarters in New York have been cancelled. In response to questions from board expanded on broadband RFP issue. No financial incentive for providers to take on project. More likely that consultant or engineering firm would coordinate multiple participants. L. Leedy pointed out that this was the approach that AES proposal was addressing.

Meeting Adjourned 12:25 pm.