



WILDWOOD

# Rural Internet Access Committee

Minutes from the Meeting of  
Tuesday, February 5, 2019

I. Welcome and Roll Call by Chair Kallaus

The meeting was called to order by Chair Kallaus, at 6:30 p.m., in the Council Chambers, at Wildwood City Hall. A roll call of members was conducted, with the following individuals being in attendance:

Committee Members:

Rick Kallaus  
Deb Trunko  
Scott Jackson

Council Member Liaisons:

Larry McGowen  
Cheryl Jordan (arrived at 8:13 pm)

City Staff and Officials:

Director of Planning and Parks Joe Vujnich  
Assistant Director of Planning and Parks Kathy Arnett

Wireless Providers:

Chris Bay – Bays ET  
David Crabtree – Wisper ISP  
Rob Quest – Wisper ISP

Committee Member Hitzeman was absent.

II. Approval of Minutes from the Meeting of November 1, 2018

A motion was made by Council Member McGowen, seconded by Committee Member Jackson, to approve the minutes. A voice vote was taken on the motion and, hearing no objections, the motion was declared passed.

III. Presentation by, and Discussion with, Joanne Hovis and Thomas Asp, of CTC Technology and Energy, the City's Consultant Engaged to Develop Workable Solutions and Grant Assistance to Solve the City's Rural Internet Issues. This

Discussion is Task #1 of the Overall Project with the Consultant.

Director of Planning Vujnich began with introductions of the City's consultants, Joanne Hovis and Thomas Asp, of CTC Technology & Energy. He noted they are in attendance at tonight's meeting, as part of Task #1 of their work program for the City in its quest for high speed rural internet solutions. The consultants were in town all day to meet with Staff, the wireless internet service providers, and now the public. Tonight's meeting will begin with the consultant providing an overview of its work to date.

Joanne Hovis, President of CTC Technology & Energy, noted she was honored to be working with the City. She then provided background on her company, which is a forty (40) person boutique consultancy, founded in 1983, focusing on public strategies to expand broadband services and internal communications. The company does not work for the industry or sell equipment. She noted that herself and Tom Asp will lead the team of consultants who will complete the recommendations to the City. She commended the City on its long-term work on this issue.

Ms. Hovis then reviewed the process that will employ in the company's work, which includes first an understanding of the City, the market, outreach and engagement with the private sector, engineering, business planning, and financial modeling. The process will take a number of months. She noted Wildwood has accomplished more than most rural communities, especially due to its long-term recognition of the issue. Wildwood is not an outlier relative to this issue. Ms. Hovis noted resolution to this type of issue requires government involvement in construction of infrastructure, but the role around internet has been unclear. In rural communities, where an internet problem has been solved, amounts of federal government assistance have been extensive, but the problem in Wildwood is the City is not classified as 'rural' by the federal government, so it is ineligible for State and federal assistance. At this time, her firm is in data collection mode.

Questions were posed and discussion was held among the Committee Members and the consultant and included the following: if the recommendations from the consultant will be a tool to assist with the State legislature for change in the rural area classification; the likelihood the recommendation will encourage lobbying by the City at the State legislature and Congress to reevaluate its definition of rural; and if changes cannot be made at the State and federal legislature, what other avenues can be pursued. It was noted the study will articulate a range of options, including comprehensive City-wide infrastructure options, and modest incremental steps. The plan will be a business plan and include strategy as well.

Dave Crabtree, Wisper ISP, noted the CAF 2 funding will allow them to expand services in Wildwood, given they will be building infrastructure nearby.

Ann Foley, 18520 Bucks Creek Lane, noted she and her family moved in September to Wildwood. They started with HughesNet, but it was horrible, so they switched to AT&T, which is adequate, but they do not run a business from their home. She then asked a

question regarding whether the consultant has experience with communities, like Wildwood, that are ineligible for funding and how successful have they been in addressing internet access. Ms. Hovis noted that, yes, they do have experience, but each community defines its own risk and success. There have been communities who have successfully implemented programs without federal or State assistance. Strategies vary from city involvement in infrastructure, similar to roads, to others that become Internet Service Providers themselves, but, more commonly, she sees a collaboration between public and private entities. The communities that have succeeded have recognized the high costs involved and supported the efforts.

Bill Young, Wild Horse Valley, questioned if the consultant ever functions as lobbyists to federal government, and if not, do they have an alliance with lobbyist firms. Do they have an understanding of how to fix the problem of the rural definition? He also noted there is a long haul fiber segment, that exists along Wild Horse Creek Road controlled by AT&T, but is not being used, and could be included in recommendation. Ms. Hovis noted her company is not a lobbying firm, but has done advocacy on behalf of local governments. The company understands the problem at the federal level relative to the definition of rural, which is based upon metropolitan areas, not specific demographics.

Glenn Hoffmeister, 3 Deerfield Ridge Road, noted he has used multiple providers over the years, but service has declined. He has been waiting on equipment to be mounted at Babler State Park, but was told by Wisper ISP he still cannot get service. He tried a Verizon hot spot for internet, but it did not provide decent service, until he added a new antenna and now he gets download speeds between 6 and 32 Mbps.

Tony Sgroi, Homestead Estates, moved in 4 years ago, and wouldn't have purchased the house had he known how bad the internet service was at this location. He has AT&T DSL, but can't work from home, nor stream video, nor use internet-based safety features in their home. He questioned if subdivisions have been successful in bringing in internet from private companies? Is 5G a viable solution? Ms. Hovis noted some subdivisions do have success in bringing internet expansion via private companies, but they may need the City to facilitate the conversation. She noted some private companies require subdivisions to front the capital cost of extending service. 5G is extremely promising for fixed and mobile service, with more capacity and competition, but the challenge is there has been limited testing, so the costs remain unknown. Her concern with 5G is it will increase the divide between urban and rural areas, given the expense to deploy.

Discussion was then held regarding the following: the areas where competition exists is where upgrades occur first, which is a negative for Wildwood, when the next level of technology comes along; 5G success is built around small cell technology (light poles, etc.), with each cell having 20 to 40 gigabyte technology and expense is incurred in the construction costs; the potential for input throughout the consultant's process; the key partner potential of Ameren Missouri, as the power and pole owner in the community; the question of any benefit in cross-referencing the original survey completed by the committee; the ability of the City to map interested parties within neighborhoods to

present to Charter, AT&T, Bays, Wisper, etc.; and the timeframe for the completion of the report is about four (4) months.

Craig Boren, Homestead Estates, noted there are approximately 160 homes in the immediate area, and the struggle with getting last mile service. He asked if there is an initiative, where areas can be determined and the residents' collective buying power be used to expedite the installation of high-speed internet service? Could a wireless provider be approached to cover all of the City, without data caps? Ms. Hovis noted wireless providers don't do custom pricing by community and it would be practically inconceivable for a large provider to consider pricing or policy adjustments. The consultant will make recommendations for how the City can work with HOAs and other groups on all components of service extensions. The consultant will make recommendations, but subdivisions could start the process on their own and try to determine interest, then self-organize, and approach the providers for a workable solution.

Dave Hudson, Babler Farm Estates, contacted Charter and was quoted a price of around \$5,000 per lot. He questioned if a subdivision could pre-wire the cable and then have the private company connect? Director of Planning Vujnich noted there is not a way for the City to require a private company to connect. Ms. Hovis noted the City could only require developer to install conduit for Charter, but it must install cable to the new development, but residents could approach companies with a proposal of installation of fiber/conduit and then connection to the service.

With no additional public comment, the City's wireless internet service providers provided updates on their services.

Chris Bay, with Bays-ET, noted has two (2) new poles coming on line, one (1) in the Rocky Ridge Subdivision, which was turned on today, and the other near the southern terminus of Wild Horse Creek Road, where work will begin soon on it. He also noted he will begin drilling on the fiber-to-the-home project in the Hawks Rest Subdivision at the beginning of March. This project will provided service at speeds of 1 gigabyte down and 500 Mbps up for \$89.99 a month.

Dave Crabtree, with Wisper ISP, noted Wisper has been working on solutions in Wildwood to solve issues.

Rob Quest, Wisper ISP, noted they are requesting five (5) new poles in their network. Three (3) would require private easements, and two (2) are in an area where the City has easements. The total number of customers served by these five (5) poles is between twenty-four (24) and thirty-three (33).

Council Liaison Jordan arrived at 8:13 pm

A resident in attendance who lives on Orrvillewood Lane noted there is a gap in service in his area. He is concerned no plans for expansion are being considered in that area. He lives at a high point and noted he would be willing to cooperate with a tower installation.

A resident in the Shiloh Valley Subdivision questioned if they were unable to get service previously, when a new tower comes online, do they have to recontact Wisper? Mr. Quest noted the company retains its lead map and will recontact those individuals with previous interest, but it may be helpful if residents recontact the company.

IV. Next Steps for Committee

The Committee does not have current steps they need to complete relative to the consultant's project. CTC will work through staff, if additional information is needed from the Committee.

V. Other Items for Consideration

The next steps, which need to be conducted relative to the installation of the Wisper ISP poles, is first the company to work through the requirements of St. Louis County for installing additional equipment on the Babler State Park Tower, which is necessary for all five (5) towers. The City will determine who the three (3) private property owners are and send them the agreements when the project is at that phase.

VII. Public Comments

No additional comments.

VIII. Closing Remarks and Adjournment

A motion was made by Committee Member Trunko, seconded by Committee Member Jackson, to adjourn the meeting. There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned by Chair Kallaus at 8:25 p.m.