

EUREKA TOWNSHIP
Dakota County, State of Minnesota

SPECIAL TOWN BOARD MEETING
August 2, 2022 – 6:00 P.M.

Call to Order

The Eureka Township Special Town Board meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m. by Town Board Chair Lu Barfknecht and the Pledge of Allegiance was given.

Members Present: Lu Barfknecht, Donovan Palmquist, Ralph Fredlund, Nancy Sauber, Kathleen Kauffman.

Others Present: Ben Blomgren and Randy Wood

Zoom Attendance: Rane Solis, Julie Larson and Deb Burkhardt.

Chair Barfknecht announced the purpose of the special meeting is to discuss the broadband proposals presented by Ben Blomgren with JTN Communications for a grant application on behalf of the Township.

Ben Blomgren of JTN Communications provided an overview of the proposed broadband grant application.

The \$90,000,000 broadband program is a state grant program from various funding sources. The purpose of the proposal is to connect as many homes as possible at the fastest speed tier.

Proposal 2: This project will serve roughly 101 homes mostly within Eureka Center and Eureka Estates. That is the most efficient use of resources I can find currently within the Township. The deployment consists of a fiber-optic distribution network engineered to be expanded beyond the bounds of the project. This system is capable of gigabit connectivity to each end user as built out and scaled.

Gigabit service is brought to Town Hall using existing technology already in place. A distribution cabinet will be placed on Town Hall property and powered either via dedicated electrical from a nearby transformer or sub-metered service. Mainline 48ct armored fiber cable will run from this point south along the Cedar Avenue right-of-way on the left side of the road until reaching 255th. Service lines are generally buried between 24-36" depth. Service will branch off 255th east and west and continue west down Granite Path west to Highview where it will turn north. The path will follow north until it reaches 240th St W diverting west and entering into Eureka Estates. Approximately 29 vaults are placed within the right-of-way to allow system interconnection. Smaller vaults for interconnection across the road are installed with conduit to prevent the need for multiple

road crossings. Customer installation costs are included in this grant proposal which provides support for the drop cable from the vault to the home, the network equipment, exterior housing, and accessories to provide service. We are future proofing to allow for expansion as other grant opportunities or private funding opportunities come about. It will have the ability to upgrade to 10 gigabits as it comes out in the future. Download and upload will have the same capacity.

Most likely the LTD grant for broadband will not go through. They won the bid but have yet to come forward with a viable contract. The LTD grant prevents us currently from receiving federal grant opportunities.

The Board questioned why the proposal does not include the southern half of Eureka Estates. Ben responded that there are huge pipelines there and running parallel to the pipelines is not viable. There is a need, and we want to serve that area, but we have not yet found a reasonable way to do it. Chair Barfknecht pointed out that there are utility easements that may be of use in providing additional service to that area. She offered to work with Ben to see if there is a path to get to the southern portion.

The total cost of project 2 is \$266,152, of which JTN and Eureka Township would each provide \$56,538. This includes conduit and drops to the home. If the Board decides to subtract conduit and drops to the home, the cost would be \$174,682 of which JTN and Eureka Township would each provide \$43,670.

Supervisor Sauber asked whether Mr. Blomgren anticipates any other state grant opportunities. Ben replied that the state legislature and federal government are committed to investing in broadband.

Vice Chair Palmquist pointed out that County Commissioner Mike Slavik had spoken about the possibility of feeding into the County's broadband lines. Ben advised that he has tried to get access to that in a commercial sense for 4-5 years now, but that fiber has not been made available to them. Supervisor Kauffman reported that she has reached out to Commissioner Slavik after attending the Dakota County Officers meeting where he mentioned disbanding the broadband committee and making the dark fiber available but has not received a call back.

Supervisor Sauber asked about the status of the Phillippe broadcast tower in which space was to be available to JTN for serving the southwest corner of the Township. Ben reported that he has lost communication with them. If the tower were to go through, it would complement this plan very well.

Supervisor Kauffman pointed out that the project 1 proposal will only serve 39 homes and she is not in favor of considering this proposal. The Townships has more than \$150,000 in ARPA funds that must be spent in the next two years and broadband is the clearest use of those funds. The Board can devote a portion of those funds to this project and then contemplate other means to serve the remaining homes with the balance. This does not have to be the last thing we do with respect to broadband. This will be the first step to

opening that up. For example, Verizon and T-Mobile are providing boxes. I am not sure how available they are, but this could be an option. I have not yet started to look at alternatives.

Mr. Blomgren pointed out that the smaller project was proposed only because of supply chain and pricing concerns.

The Board agreed that it would be prudent to upgrade broadband in sections. This project would be a good starting point, and we can expand down the road, but we need to start somewhere.

Supervisor Kauffman asked how the grant money will be handled. With the federal grant, the money would have come to the Township, and we would have controlled the checkbook. Ben responded that JTN will be the applicant for this grant and, he believes the money will be distributed as items are purchased. The state will have oversight of the spending.

Supervisor Fredlund stated he is in favor of committing ARPA funds to project #2 as it shows forward motion in establishing access to broadband in the Township.

Motion: Supervisor Kauffman moved that the Township support proposal #2 at a cost to the Township of \$56,538 with the caveat that if Chair Barfknecht can show Ben Blomgren a utility easement to encompass all of Eureka Estates we would like to include more homes even if the price increases. Supervisor Fredlund seconded. *Motion carried 5-0.*

Adjournment

Motion: Supervisor Kauffman moved to adjourn the meeting. Chair Barfknecht seconded. *Motion carried 5-0.*

Meeting adjourned at 6:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Ranee Solis, Town Clerk

Minutes Officially Approved By: _____ on: _____
Town Supervisor Date