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TO: Katie Scott
Chair, Ways & Means Committee

THROUGH: Gregory Dill
County Administrator

FROM: Barb Fuller
Chair, Broadband Task Force

DATE: August 7, 2019

SUBJECT: Broadband Task Force Update & Funding Request for 2019

BOARD ACTION REQUESTED:

It is requested that the Board of Commissioners approve an initial appropriation to the Washtenaw County Broadband Task Force in an amount not to exceed \$35,000 for the purposes of collecting the data necessary to respond to a future grant application for broadband services.

BACKGROUND:

With a sunset date of 12/31/18, the Washtenaw County Broadband Subcommittee's final report revealed that at least 8,000 households, totaling at least 20,000 people in Washtenaw County, do not have access to broadband internet in their homes. Lack of accessibility has a significant impact on economic development, property values, personal prosperity, education, health & safety and overall quality of life. This broadband inequity affects 16 of our mostly rural, western townships in the County.

In April of 2019, the Washtenaw County Board of Commissioners acted upon the Broadband Subcommittee's Final Report of 2018 and convened a task force to explore the possibility of broadband equity in Washtenaw County, via collaboration with underserved townships, and utilizing grant opportunities and a partnership with Washtenaw County to achieve broadband equity by 2022.

The Board of Commissioners resolution (19-074) created the Broadband Task Force (BBTF) naming Barb Fuller, Chair and Ben Fineman, Vice-Chair. They were directed to appoint a steering committee that contained a core group from the original subcommittee as well as representatives from under/unserved townships.

DISCUSSION:

Since convening in April, the group has identified the work necessary to achieve the Board of Commissioners objectives, through 4, strategic workgroups:

1. **Data Project** – Tasked with developing and implementing the survey instrument that garners the information necessary for successful grant consideration
2. **RFP Readiness** – Tasked with collecting information, including potential grants, that will be necessary for successful grant consideration
3. **By-Laws** – Tasked with the development of by-laws that provide the group members a clear understanding of their charge and expectations
4. **Township Engagement** – Tasked with ensuring that the 16 identified under and un-served townships are represented and aware of the goals of this group.

The group has also discussed their optimal membership, ensuring that all municipalities interested in joining the broadband equity efforts are afforded a seat at the table, while utilizing the expertise that was instrumental in the success of the previous Broadband Subcommittee.

Recommendations of the subcommittee:

The Broadband Task Force appreciates the continued support from the Washtenaw County Board of Commissioners, and the group is committed to achieving their directive of countywide broadband equity by 2022. In order to accomplish this goal, however, the task force is requesting that a financial allocation be authorized to support the work of the Task Force and to compensate task force members as required by the IRS.

The Broadband Task Force developed a request for a four year budget to correspond with the County's budgeting process, the established timeframe of the task force, and the actions the group believes are necessary to successfully pursue a future grant opportunity.

The \$272,000 investment proposed in these figures would be leveraged to take advantage of future state and federal grant opportunities to fund to achieve countywide broadband equity by the year 2022, a goal that could take as much as \$80 million to fully fund. The investment requested by the BBTF will serve as a catalyst to bring in significant external funding.

However the action being considered here only requests funding at this time for activities which need time to be prepared prior to any grant application, and which could be completed before the end of 2019. These activities include a survey of the status of access to broadband and a study of the rate at which residents could be expected to use these services. The funding necessary for years 2020, 2021, and 2022, estimated at \$231,000 in one time funding, will be considered during the budget reaffirmation occurring later this fall.

IMPACT ON HUMAN RESOURCES:

No positions will be created as a result of this action. Regular support for this task force will be offered by staff from the office of the Washtenaw County Administrator, with technical assistance to be requested on an as needed basis.

IMPACT ON BUDGET:

This action would allocate \$35,000 in 2019 to the Broadband Task Force, including utilizing the entire remainder of the Board of Commissioner's Undesignated Allocate, totaling \$32,900, with the remainder to be funded through a reduction in personnel savings due to vacant positions within the Administrator's budget.

Additionally, all appointed members of boards, committees, and commissions are eligible to receive per diem stipends. No budget adjustment will be made for these expenditures. Instead these activities will be directly charged to the personnel budget of the County Administrator for the remainder of 2019.

IMPACT ON INDIRECT COSTS:

None

IMPACT ON OTHER COUNTY DEPARTMENTS OR OUTSIDE AGENCIES:

None

CONFORMITY TO COUNTY POLICIES:

This action conforms to County policies.

ATTACHMENTS/APPENDICES:

- Proposed 4-Year Broadband Task Force Budget
- Resolution

**Washtenaw County Broadband Task Force
Activities and Funding requested by the Broadband Task Force, 2019 - 2022**

Deliverables	2019	2020	2021	2022	Total
2019 Broadband Coverage Survey Targeting 16 under/unserved townships	\$25,000				\$25,000
2019 Random Sample of "Take Rate" Who would subscribe if broadband became available?	\$10,000				\$10,000
2021 Refresh 2019 Broadband Coverage Survey			\$25,000		\$25,000
2021 Refresh 2019 Random Sample of "Take Rate"			\$10,000		\$10,000
Grant Response Preparedness		\$80,000			80,000
Future Grant Opportunity Preparation			\$80,000		80,000
Task Force Steering Committee Stipends \$25 x 20 TF Member Positions x 24 bi-monthly mtgs	\$6,000*	12,000	12,000	12,000	\$42,000
Total projected expenses June 2019-Dec 2022	\$41,000	\$92,000	\$127,000	\$12,000	\$272,000

The BBTF believes the proposed \$272,000 investment is needed to leverage the estimated \$80,000,000 required to achieve countywide broadband equity by the year 2022.

**Stipends for members of the Broadband Task Force will be charged to the Administrator's existing Personnel Budget for the remainder of 2019*

A RESOLUTION ALLOCATING FUNDS TO THE WASHTENAW COUNTY BROADBAND
TASK FORCE FOR 2019

WASHTENAW COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

August 7, 2019

WHEREAS, The Washtenaw County Board of Commissioners created a Broadband Task Force on April 17, 2019 via resolution 19-074; and

WHEREAS, the Task Force has been charged with exploring countywide broadband equity via collaboration with local townships, and to explore grant opportunities that would result in countywide broadband equity; and

WHEREAS, the Broadband Task Force has convened and has carefully evaluated the resources necessary to achieve the Board of Commissioners objective of broadband equity in Washtenaw County; and

WHEREAS, the leverage of County resources to achieve broadband equity in Washtenaw County could yield an estimated \$80,000,000 in grant funding; and

WHEREAS, the committee has determined that a successful grant application requires three major components; current and reliable data, RFP readiness and local township engagement; and

WHEREAS, a survey of the 16 under/unserved townships in Washtenaw County will likely be required to accompany any grant application, as the data demonstrates the need in these communities as well as the level of interest; and

WHEREAS, a successful grant application requires a very specific survey instrument, with specific data points being collected; and

WHEREAS, in the collective experience of the members of the Task Force, grant windows are often abbreviated and require the applicant to be organized and expedient in expressing their interest in consideration in the grant; and

WHEREAS, the Task Force believes it important to be prepared to respond to a grant opportunity and will require the assistance of a qualified vendor to assist with the organization of materials, writing the grant and submitting documents; and

WHEREAS, the Task Force is working to ensure the support of all 16 townships that are affected by broadband inequity; and

WHEREAS, while the Task Force is hopeful a grant award will occur in the next two years, it is important to note that, should that not be the case, the information gathered on this issue must be refreshed in 2021 to maintain the County's position and achieve a successful grant award; and

WHEREAS, the Broadband Task Force has developed a four year plan specifying the activities necessary to understand the current access to broadband within the county and the portion of

the population which would utilize these services if offered, preparing technical documents, and providing stipends to the task force membership; and

WHEREAS, these future year requests will be considered as a part of the county's budget reaffirmation process.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, the Washtenaw County Board of Commissioners hereby allocates first year funding for the Broadband Task Force in the amount of \$35,000 which is inclusive of data collection (\$25,000) and random sampling of 'take rate' (\$10,000).