



County sending broadband proposal forward

Proposal defines success, outlines risks involved

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LOGAN - The final broadband outreach proposal was finished Monday, and the Hocking County Commissioners voted to send it to the Ohio Broadband Council (OBC) to request state assistance with the plan during their regular meeting Tuesday.

The proposal was submitted by a broadband advisory committee consisting of Hocking, Perry and Vinton counties called the Hocking-Perry-Vinton Regional Network (HPVRN). The goal of the proposal is to provide "increased availability of broadband...to promote job growth, telemedicine capabilities, reduction in government costs, increased capabilities and support to both K012 schools and institutes of higher education, as well as improved ability of affordable broadband service to rural residential families throughout the three counties."

If the OBC provides state assistance, a community access point (CAP), formerly referred to as a point of presence or POP, would be created in Logan. Hocking College, the Logan Community Investment Corporation and the Hocking Valley Community Hospital would purchase and install fiber optic cable from a point at the chosen CAP site and would distribute broadband services to the municipal building, the Hocking County 911 Center, the hospital, the industrial park and terminate at the new Hocking College Energy Institute about two miles away.

The service would be spread to Perry and Vinton counties through existing state-owned MARCs towers, and would include wireless distribution to rural areas in all three counties.

No funds would be needed for this project; the state would pay for the cost of the CAP and provide free connectivity to the OSCnet, the broadband backbone, for a period of two years. After two years, future monthly service payments would be negotiated.

However, the counties may require assistance for equipment purchases to take advantage of services provided by HPVRN during the project.

According to the proposal, the project would be considered a success when the HPVRN is self-sustaining and able to take over costs, 80 percent of the public and educational entities receive service and broadband has been used as a business development tool to create new jobs in southeast Ohio, within two years.

But the project wouldn't come without risks. Risks include the counties not finding funding to purchase required interface equipment, not reaching contracts with Internet service providers to extend service, not contracting a long-term source for system administration or maintenance support and not having technical assistance readily available locally.

If the state provides funding for the project, it will also attempt to resolve some of these risks by pursuing funds to help the counties purchase interface equipment, identifying are ISPs to help distribute the broadband and

enlisting state government and institutes of higher education to help provide technical assistance.

HPVRN will seek funding for network expansion, and two and five year plans are being developed o access funding from the Office of Appalachia, USDA, Homeland Security, U.S. Department of Justice and similar agencies.

In other news, Hocking County EMA Director Barb Bunthoff re-submitted her resignation letter to the commissioners. She stated she has been getting many calls about her wording of the letter by calling it a resignation and would like it re-submitted as a retirement letter.

"There's a lot of people I'm going to miss," Bunthoff said.

Bunthoff will be giving the commissioners a copy of the director position description so they may advertise.

"Due to the fact that the Ohio Revised Code has been revised, I'm going to have to change some of the wording before I bring it in," Bunthoff said.

The commissioners also further discussed a proposed Hocking Hills Tourism Association resolution that Pauline O'Neill, president of the HHTA, submitted for their viewing last week. O'Neill wanted the commissioners' input on the resolution before she made a vote at the next HHTA meeting.

The resolution stated that the HHTA will proactively try to preserve Hocking County's natural beauty.

"As a county, we need to look at those things," Hocking County Commissioner John Walker said about the resolution.

"Some of the words are just strong," Commissioner Gary Starner said.

The commissioners plan to talk to O'Neill more about a re-write of the resolution before giving an opinion.

The commissioners will also look into giving a \$500 reward offered last year to the person who provided information that helped lead to the arrest and convictions of those who vandalized the General Clay Products building.

They were reminded of their offer through a phone call and will look into the status of the case before they give out the reward.

"We need to follow up on this," Starner said.

Hocking County 911 Director Sandy Wintermute met with the commissioners at their meeting in executive session to discuss personnel matters.

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