

Minutes of Leyden Broadband Committee Meeting w/ USDA

August 24, 2016 at 9:00 am

Committee members present: Bob Ryan, Tom Luck, Lance Fritz and Al Woodhull.

Others present: USDA's Gordon (Rick) Kendrick, Pam Brown, Michelle Giarusso, Bob Handsaker, Charlemont's WiredWest delegate and Broadband Chair.

The meeting started at 9:05 a.m. and ended at 10:40 a.m.

Rick Kendrick introduced himself and gave us an overview of both the USDA's Broadband Loan and Broadband Grant Programs.

The USDA's Broadband Loan Program would require that the USDA be in control of Leyden's build out rather than MBI. This would be in direct conflict with MBI's intent and put at risk the \$680,000 of promised State aid. Beyond that, the rates available to us under the State House Loan Program appear to be better than rates available from the USDA. Based on what we have found to date, we have effectively eliminated this program as a source of debt funding.

The USDA Broadband Grant program currently includes two available grants. They are a Community Connect Grant (intended for Broadband deployment into rural areas) and a Distance Learning & Telemedicine Grant. We were specifically interested in the Community Connect Grant and disheartened to find that the Grant awards are heavily weighted towards Tribal Nations and low per capita income communities. In discussion that followed, it was quickly determined that Leyden would most likely not qualify for this Grant because of the award criteria as it currently exists and the small amount of funding authorized for the program itself (\$13 million). We did see some value to the Distance Learning and Telemedicine Grant and may explore this further.

Beyond Broadband loans and grants, we also explored the Community Facility Grant Program. This Grant is intended to help communities looking to add a Community Center, Town Barn, etc. This program is funded annually at approximately \$200 million and unlike the Community Connect Grant it is

allocated to the individual states for distribution. There is movement to include Broadband deployment under this Program, as well as to increase the funding appropriated for community granting. We will monitor any developments to this Program as they occur.

Respectfully submitted,

Bob Ryan, Chair
Leyden Broadband Committee