

Jasper County Board of Commissioners

February 22, 2021

Work Session Minutes

6:00 P.M.

Commissioner Henry called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

Commissioners Present: Chairman, Bruce Henry; Vice-Chairman, Gerald Stunkel; Don Jernigan; and Stephen Ledford.

Staff Present: Mike Benton, County Manager and Sharon Robinson, County Clerk.

Work Session:

1. Jasper County Public Facilities Authority Board Appointments- Review Applicants

Bill Nash- Mr. Bill Nash stood before the board to introduce himself. He stated that he has lived in the county full-time since 2015. He stated that he saw Gwinnett County grow tremendously. He believes growth is headed our way. He believes we should be ready for it instead of react. He has been an architect for all of his career. He stated that he is always thinking about what happens next.

Rusty Bullard- Mr. Bullard stood before the board. He stated that he feels that the PFA is an important authority.

2. Central Georgia EMC Broadband Initiative Presentation and Discussion

Mr. Herchel Arant (Central GA EMC Senior Vice President of Engineering and Energy Supply, stood before the board to present the Broadband initiative. Central GA EMC has partnered with Conexon. EMC will install a fiber network throughout their electric territory. All of the power lines will have fiber installed on them. EMC will use the lines for operational purposes i.e. smart grid. Conexon will use the excess capacity on the fiber network to deliver fiber broadband service. Conexon will deliver the service and respond to calls. There will be two service levels. There will be a 100 mb plan-\$50 per month (download speeds and upload speeds are the same). The other will be 1 gigabit per month (\$80 per month).

Every customer will eventually have access to the fiber broadband network. There are about 7300 potential service locations for broadband in Jasper County, 4600 of those do not have access to broadband. Central GA EMC serves 5000 with electric service, 3900 of those do not have broadband. Central GA EMC delivers electricity to 85% of the residents without access to broadband. Mr. Arant presented and discussed maps that show Central GA EMC service in the county.

Mr. Arant stated that investment that they intend to make in the fiber network is \$19 million. Based on the current mileage rates the first five years of the network being in place would result

in property tax revenue of \$1.1 million for the county. The broadband service would be subject to sales tax.

Chairman Henry asked if we put money in on the project would it get us broadband sooner and how much sooner. Mr. Arant stated that the deployment schedule is based on density. They use the funding narrative to incent the partners to get to the rural counties faster. There could be a three to four year difference. Chairman Henry asked if the fact that Jasper County has very little access to broadband now being taken into consideration. Mr. Arant stated that they are taking it into consideration. Chairman Henry asked if Mr. Arant knew how much it would cost to be in second place to receive broadband. Mr. Arant stated that Monroe County's investment totaled about 5% of the total anticipated investment in that county.

Commissioner Ledford ask it the service will be available to residents in the county who are not EMC customers. Mr. Arant stated that their primary focus is EMC customers but they are working on figuring out how to answer that question. The business model was set up for fiber on the EMC poles. So they do not have control over other company's poles and there are no easement for the installation of the fiber.

Commissioner Jernigan stated that there are some developments in the county where there are not any poles. Mr. Arant stated that the fiber will follow the power. However the customers get their power will be how they receive the fiber.

Chairman Henry declared the Work Session closed at 6:31 p.m.

Bruce Henry, Chairman

Sharon S. Robinson, Clerk