

The Shelby County Commissioners met on Monday June 2, 2025, at 8:00 a.m., and present were Commissioners Abel, Lawson, Runnebohm, County Auditor.

MINUTES:

Motion to approve minutes from May 27, 2025, was made by Lawson, seconded by Runnebohm, motion passes 2-0-1 (Abel).

BROADBAND:

Commissioner Abel advised that nothing would be voted on today, this is just for the public with an overview of what the scope of the issue is and what we have done to study the issue, and what we have done to explore avenues that will help us become more aware of broadband accessible community. There are a lot of pockets of Shelby County that do not have access to reliable affordable high speed internet options. When the County undertook the project, it was the county looking forward to some of the funding opportunities that were coming as a result of State and Federal Dollars. We have worked to better understand the issues better. Understand our options and ultimately come up with some solutions that are not a silver bullet by any means but moved us substantially closer to increased broadband availability throughout the community. At this time Abel turned it over to Scott Rudd that has been working with Shelby County for quite some time through multiple State and Federal grant rounds trying to round up as much outside money for the county as possible and we have had great success. At this time Scott Rudd spoke and had advised Shelby County was one of the largest recipients in the State of State Broadband Funding, so major win of 10.8 million. Rudd advised you have a huge county and so very sparsely populated areas that are very challenging. And that is why none of the broadband providers are there and that is why the county brought us in to help. Kind of overcome some of those major hurdles, and so we have had that great win we just learned. Rudd advised there are several folks here from the scoring committee through the RFQ & RFP process that has been going on for several months that might want to talk. Tom John with Taft Law spoke about the process that took well over a year ago and where Shelby County entered into what is called a 523 procurement understate statute. To get there it was a lengthy process, we went out to the market and said here is the problem here is what Shelby County looks like as a community and here is what they are willing to invest into this problem to solve the issues, and we received nine responses. They held lots of meetings reviewing those that had written materials and then follow ups. After we felt we learned enough we then moved to the procurement process. Once again, we went out to the market go several responses and frankly you had a lot of good responses. There were lots of good partners that could have come up and would have had the financial background to take on this project and good thoughts about how to approach it. In statute you must have a working group of parties who are involved on the government side from the community side to bring their insights to this. Shelby County had a great group. After all the meetings with each vendor and talking through things. When all things were considered, the group picked Nine Star. John advised at this point we are ready for a council hearing, because the Council is the fiscal body for the county. The Council also needs to approve the agreement. The agreement that has been put together is a good agreement that allows for an iterative partnership. Rudd advised the state has announced the BEAD Awards. This is the State 800 plus million-dollar grant funding, which is very important to us. And so, the 1st round of those grants have been quote unquote awarded and he puts quotes around them because they are unable to tell us who are winners. And, by the way, Shelby was successful you know, we can see the map but cannot tell how much yet. There are two more rounds that the state will negotiate with that winning bidder. Rudd said if the County does not compete and put its best foot forward counties around you will out compete you and they will attract that private investment quicker. Rudd advised that not all areas of Shelby County are eligible for the Sate or

Federal funding and appears will not be eligible. So, this ring, this fiber, this project, and this partnership become very important at this very moment, as the largest injection of funding ever seen in our State is about to roll out. The next 6 to 9 months and be completely pushed out 868 million. Now is the time to really lean in and say, Hey we want to compete here. Runnebohm asked who received the \$10.8 million that Shelby County received. Rudd advised it was Comcast. This is not the same of BEAD, it was thru OCRA and was part of a program that we do not think is going to continue. Lawson asked of the 868 million what we hope to get out of this. George Plisinski with Nine Star explained the program went through several rounds of challenges. It is all based on the FCC'S national broadband map, and as I am sure the committee can allude to. There is some weak spots in it. It was setting a threshold at speed at 100 EMG down 20 MEG up, which sounds pretty good right now. There are lots of hope from the providers, especially. You know from us that upstream speed requirements maybe became a hundred. They are looking forward to the next subsequent rounds. The only difference is so when round one providers got to pick their own areas and kind of figure out their routes. Round 2, the Indiana Broadband office is selecting census blocks and putting together project areas. They seem to think that round 3 will follow the same thing. Lawson out at this time. Abel wanted to know who came up with the score. And the long story short is he asked people that represented the different areas that would be impacted by the current deficiencies would be impacted by improved broadband access. Abel advised when he looked at what broadband does dependable, available, it impacts education, health care, economic opportunities, it allows people to pursue work from home, agriculture opportunities. . Katrina Hall with Indiana Farm Bureau who is an advocate for Broadband. Hall talked about the need for broadband in all of the rural areas, for farming and education. She has really appreciated the opportunity to be on the workforce. The county will always have holes. This is always going to be challenging for broadband, but I hope the county will fight for this, it is just like the highways. She feels fiber is what the county really needs. She encourages the county in whatever they can do. You can google things on your phone, but you cannot do homework with a phone and COVID taught us a lot of those things. Runnebohm asked how could this be a money maker for the county. There is an arrangement in the agreement, but we would need to look at it where the county and Nine Star could assess a dollar per connection, type of revenue model where a user would pay a dollar per month, or whatever it is that would go into a fund, and help support that network or other county uses down the road. Runnebohm asked we are basically charging the end user which we do, is that actually helping us having affordable internet if we have higher prices because of our turnaround. Rudd advised he thinks that has yet to be determined. It could be a penny, it could be a dollar, or it could be nothing. Runnebohm asked if he heard this correctly, if another provider wants to use the fiber in the circle around the county, they can hook into it and provide an area with internet. George with Nine Star advised yes, if there is a provider that would like to come in and get internet to a certain area they would lease, they are willing to lease fibers at our kind and standard rates. Some companies may find it a lot cheaper to lease instead of putting new infrastructure in. How long would it take to put the 465-ring in? They are under a time restructure and thought it would be June or July 2027. Runnebohm asked with the 1,700 homes that you will be servicing what would the monthly bills run. George advised right now that the rate across the entire network is \$59.50 a month for a 150 by 150. There would be no connection fee if you come in later and build a house. Customers will always just pay the monthly fee; they are never charged a connection fee. Brian Pullen, IT director for Shelby Eastern Schools, our area is one of the areas that is definitely affected by this. Nine Star is a great company; we have had fiber cuts but have never been out longer than day. Shelby Eastern actually has 46 miles of fiber between us. They help maintain and provides us dual pass to our internet. With this ring we would also be able to support Southwestern and Triton. Both of those areas are also in the area of broadband deserts. Shelbyville itself has options. The county does not. Nine Star is a very good company to work with, and they want to partner with Shelby County. Lisa Schaler – Is there a deadline to use the various finds awarded before which they are lost. Abel advised he cannot speak for the Council, but I do not believe so. The Council at the end of last year set aside \$3 million for broadband and those dollars were not subject to callback provisions where

we would have lost that funding. Auditor Glackman thought maybe she was talking about the BEAD monies not the ARPA monies. Tom John explained there is no callback on the BEAD monies. Rudd wanted to get this closed up, but one thing he heard George say is they are working in 7 counties. So Shelby County is competing and you can make this faster or comprehensive or it can be slower and you could have deserts remaining., and there does not appear to be Federal or State funding coming down the pipeline, beyond this particular moment, there does not appear to be funding outside of the local funding other than private. So, we are kind of at this junction, right where you have the ability to finally move this thing forward as quickly as you can and as deeply as you can. And I think we have queued up a really great opportunity for the county with tons of folks contributing to that and lots of investors being interested. Tom Johns advised Nine Star is committed and if you do not commit you will be left out in the market. This opportunity is to control your own fate. Mike Carpenter asked the Commissioners at this point a timeline by which you may present another contract proposal to the Council, because the commissioners have a deadline couple month, or maybe tomorrow. Abel advised they can have it placed on the next Agenda for approval. Carpenter asked if the Commissioners would allow the public to review the contract before the Council sees it? Abel advised that it would be a question for Tom John and not because there is any hide the ball, but because there's competition between different Internet providers. I do not want to disclose what maybe proprietary information on Nine Star side, but it is not for secret purposes. Carpenter asked if there would be any kind of dispute resolution mechanism within the contract. Tom John advised there is. Abel advised they tried to make in many protections for the county and the consumers as possible into it. One of the things that was important was not just paying for the fiber to go into the ground but for it to be verified that what they promised is actually being delivered. They would have to show us speed test that they are getting upload and download speeds that they promised. There will be no money disbursed until these tests are done. Carpenter asked if there was any way to determine the pockets of areas that will be hard, if not impossible to get broadband or internet service to, beforehand. Not before the county does this, because we do not know if somebody else will get some of the money until the State and Federal release that. Did the state make up a made so that people would know if it was going to be hard for them to get internet. Yes, there are all kinds of maps showing desert areas. You can go online and find these maps. Blake Newkirk has a couple clarifying questions, The \$3 million that was said was going to go to this by the Council, this was ARPA money. This was supposed to be set to certain things. Yes, there were broader interpretations of the APRA that were utilized by communities but generally yes. The previous Council said in meetings that they were setting aside \$3 million for broadband, but nothing was ever signed and never voted on it. Blake just wants to reiterate that that money was initially said it was going to be used. Unfortunately, there was never a vote. This was information only, no action was taken.

SHERIFF:

N/A

HIGHWAY:

Ben advised the culvert on 350 W should be open starting next week. This was information only, no action was taken.

CLAIMS:

Payroll – Motion to approve payroll was made by Lawson, seconded by Runnebohm, approved 3-0.

Monthly Claims – Motion to approve monthly claims was made by Lawson, seconded by Runnebohm, approved 3-0.

TRANSFER / ADDITIONALS:

N/A

MISCELLANEOUS :

EMA/ UPDATE:

Denis advised they have started the walls and ready for the electrician to come in and wire. This was information only, no action was taken.

COUNTY SURVEYOR:

Jeff Powell wanted to let the commissioners, and the media know that they have started spraying the ditches, so if people see them out that is what they are doing. They have started down on 350 S and will be heading North. This was information only, no action was taken.

There being no further business to come before board. A motion to adjourn was made by Abel, seconded by Runnebohm, approved 2-0.

AYE:

NAYE:

ATTEST:

AMY L. GLACKMAN
SHELBY COUNTY AUDITOR