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Stoddard County Commission Meeting - Monday, June 26, 2023 - Broadband and ARPA Funds Discussed

JUNE 27TH 2023 BY DEE LOFLIN

Stoddard County Commission Meeting - Monday, June 26, 2023 - Broadband and ARPA Funds Discussed

The Stoddard County Commission opened with the Pledge of Allegiance and a prayer by Commissioner C.D. Stewart. Presiding Commissioner Greg Mathis was not in attendance for today's meeting.

Dave Wyman, City Administrator for Dexter - Update on Hotel Project

The Stoddard County Commission agreed to fund the city of Dexter with \$800,000 in ARPA funds to help facilitate a new hotel. The Hampton Hotel is coming to Dexter.

Funding for the project has been established with \$300,000 from the city of Dexter and the Industrial Development Association is funding \$750,000 from tipping fees.

Mr. Dave Wyman, City Administrator at Dexter brought in design drawings of the new hotel and discussed the cost of the Arvin Road Water/Sewer Hotel Project with the Commission. He said the total contractor cost is \$410,950. The city paid \$105,217.25 on April 13, 2023. The city will make another payment of \$272,854.25 on July 3rd.

Jim Grebing, Bootheel Regional Planning Commission Director - ARPA Update

Mr. Grebing still did not have an updated ARPA spreadsheet as requested at previous meetings by Presiding Commissioner Greg Mathis. "We will have an updated spreadsheet possibly next week," stated Grebing. He said they will get that up-to-date

once Katelyn Lambert returns to work on July 3, 2023. She has been on leave of absence.

"We have received some bills from water districts and will get those finalized," commented Grebing. Some water districts and townships have been waiting more than 3-5 weeks for their reimbursements.

"I am waiting on the Commission's decision as to re-bid the broadband project and possibly scope it back to include LMI and I have done some research on that," continued Grebing. "We are on stand by until you (the Commission) made that decision."

"I can draft an agreement where it would be fairly seamless for the five years of ownership by the county," continued Grebing.

Dee Loflin, ShowMe Times, asked had he not heard that the Commission voted not to accept the bid and would not entertain being owners of a broadband network for five years. She also asked about the enormous bill of more than \$100,000 the city of Puxico received for not accepting the CDGB Grant. She also asked if the County would receive a bill for engineering fees on the broadband project from Conexon LLC.

Commissioner Stewart asked if the County had a contract with the engineer. Grebing said he did not know if a contract was done. It was determined later in the meeting that there is no contract and that Bootheel Regional Planning Commission had not received a bill yet from Conexon for either the County or the city of Puxico.

Commissioner Jarrell said she was not aware of any type of agreement that would make the County liable for the fees should the project be rejected.

Furthermore the question is why is Bootheel Regional Planning Commission sending a bill for engineering fees when they have not received an invoice of any kind from Conexon? And how does BRPC calculate administration fees on a grant project for a city that is a member that did not have a bidder at all in the case of the city of Puxico? Lots of questions still looming without definitive answers.

In terms of engineering costs Conexon and not just done a PER they have done work on bid documents, incurred some costs and construction documents. If the grant is viable the total engineering is \$357,000; however since the bid was rejected BRPC is unsure if they will receive a bill or not for the County or the city of Puxico.

Loyd Rice, GoSEMO Fiber and Broadband Update

Rice had a conference call about the BEAD Grant on Thursday and it now looks as if they too will have prevailing wages attached to the grant making the project more than double

in cost. The bidder would also have to do a 25% match. If the Commission commits the \$1 million in ARPA funds previously allocated by the previous Commission in 2021 GoSEMO Fiber could build 40 miles of broadband in the rural Puxico area. They are already (without any grant money) putting in fiber in the city limits of Puxico. Rice said if this \$1 million was committed then the GoSEMO board would see this as legitimate "skin" in the game. He thought the board would approve the build of the additional 33 miles of rural Puxico. The Commission asked for this agreement in writing and Rice said this could be done.

Dave Cooper - Water District #5 and ARPA Funds

Cooper stated that the Commission approved ARPA funds for Water District #5 to purchase a new vehicle. The company in St. Louis they want to purchase from is needing a check or the vehicle will be sent somewhere else. Cooper said the proper paperwork has been submitted and has been waiting a few weeks. Commissioner Stewart said that Grebing, BRPC Director, was just here, but left the meeting and that is who he needed to contact to speed the process up. It should not take this long!

Blair Moran, President of the Bloomfield Assistance League along with Jerry Buttry, Gary Deardorft, Ed Gargas, and Mike Conway, board members for the Bloomfield Assistance League.

Moran said that they would like the Commission to donate 40 acres of ground to the north of the Missouri Veterans Cemetery for a period of five years and then the Bloomfield Assistance League will donate it to the Cemetery. The cemetery will need more space by then and this will negate a lot of red tape by giving the land to them instead of directory from the County to the Cemetery which can't honestly be done because a state cannot receive a donation from a county. The Assistance League raises funds to help maintain the cemetery is a non-profit organization.

The Commission thanked them for their continued work at the cemetery and honoring area veterans. "I appreciate who you all do to honor the veterans," commented Commissioner Jarrell. "The cemetery is well maintained and a beautiful burial place for our veterans."

The Commission is on board with this but wanted to wait for Presiding Commissioner Greg Mathis for a final vote from all three members. The Assistance League said this was good and thanked the Commission.

Other Business:

Motion to accept the minutes for June 20, 2023 meeting made by Commissioner Stewart. Seconded by Commissioner Jarrell. Both voted yes and motion passed.

Motion to accept the closed session minutes for June 20, 2023 made by Commissioner Jarrell. Seconded by Stewart. Both voted yes and motion passed.

Motion to go into closed session made by Commissioner Stewart at 10:57 a.m. Seconded by Commissioner Jarrell. Both voted yes and motion passed.

LAST UPDATED ON JUNE 27TH 2023 BY DEE LOFLIN

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