

JONES COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Jones County Government Center Pavilion

Public Hearing

September 24, 2020

6:00 PM

The Jones County Board of Commissioners held a Public Hearing at 6:00 p.m. September, 2020 at the Jones County Government Center. Members present were:

Chris Weidner – Chairman

Sam Kitchens – Vice Chairman/ District I Commissioner

Jonathan Pitts – District II Commissioner

Jason Rizner – County Administrator

Shannon Wagner – HR Director/ County Clerk

Chairman Weidner called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

Attachments to the minutes are filed separately from the minutes in clasp envelopes labeled by meeting in the commissioner's vault.

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA:

NEW BUSINESS:

- Comm. Pitts opened the meeting by reading 2 support letters from Rep. Doug Collins and Sen. Kelly Loeffler showing their support for the broadband connectivity initiative in Jones County. Comm. Pitts stated that a project this big would take time, but Jones County needed to be ready for it when the time came. Comm. Pitts opened the floor for comments on broadband.
- Ginger Bailey, Jones County Board of Education, stated that she was so pleased that the Board of Commissioners was taking this issue on during the pandemic. Ms. Bailey stated that there are 950 virtual learners right now in Jones County, and, because of the students, it was vital to have broadband.
- John Wood, Jones County resident, stated that he attended the broadband meeting in 2017 and stated County Administrator, Jason Rizner, was very instrumental in working on the broadband issue. He asked Mr. Rizner to pull the notes from that meeting to have for the next meeting. Mr. Wood also stated that broadband was a regional and statewide problem.
- Greg Mullis, Sr. Vice President of Tri County EMC & Chairman of the Development Authority, stated that Tri County has been working on this issue and is open to partnerships to serve the community. Mr. Mullis stated that a feasibility study had been done in 2019 and it would take \$60 million for a broadband project covering all 8 counties that they serve.

- Dr. James Smith, River North resident, stated that a lot of people liked living in less dense areas and needed to be able to work from home. Dr. Smith stated that this was an economic development issue at the end of the day.
- James Schoepf, Jones County resident, stated that he works for an IT company out of Memphis, TN and that he needed the broadband to be able to work from home. He also stated that the kids needed to be able to do schooling from home during the pandemic.
- Comm. Kitchens gave a brief recount of the meetings he attended with Jason Rizner and Chairman Weidner involving broadband initiatives regionally. Comm. Kitchens also stated that Jason Rizner has worked extensively on broadband maps, colos and potential partnerships over the last couple of years and recent legislative changes could allow for more partnership opportunities. COVID-19 has shed light on our lack of broadband, but it has also brought attention on the regional need as well.
- Comm. Pitts thanked everyone for coming to the meeting and stated that a there would be a work session in October to continue the conversation about broadband.

CITIZENS COMMENTS (3 Minutes):

COMMISSONER COMMENTS:

ADJOURNMENT: Meeting was adjourned at 6:49 p.m.

MINUTES APPROVED

Jones County Board of Commissioners

Chris Weidner, Chairman

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