



Friday, March 13, 2009

Senator Amy Klobuchar
Washington Office
302 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Re: City of Red Wing, Minnesota Fiber Optic Project

Dear Senator Klobuchar,

This letter seeks your support for a fiber optic project in Red Wing, Minnesota which is currently underserved by incumbent service providers that is limiting economic development and hampering our community's ability to compete in a national and international economy. More precisely, we seek support and guidance on how to access Federal funding to assist us in overcoming the critical communications obstacles we are currently experiencing.

Because the condition of our current infrastructure is unable to meet our community's needs, the City of Red Wing is exploring a Fiber-to-the-Premise project with a goal of improved connectivity for our schools and government facilities along with enhanced economic development capabilities and services to all businesses and homes in Red Wing. Fiber Optics will complement our existing state-of-the-art health care facility; help our business community to compete nationally and internationally, and provide more choices for our citizens, especially those in unserved or underserved areas of the community.

The City of Red Wing has been involved with fiber optic connectivity at some level for the past decade. In the late 1990's, the City partnered with Goodhue County to interconnect numerous City and County facilities with fiber. In 2004 the City of Red Wing and the Red Wing School District began discussions on how they might benefit from a robust fiber connection. This conversation took on urgency when the Red Wing School District was unable to meet a state mandate for online testing due to the inadequacy of the incumbent providers systems. In 2006, the City and school district completed an engineering study which addressed the need for improved communications. The study indicated that a "fiber loop" was necessary to overcome the communication issues and that this loop could be extended to a Fiber-to-the-Premise initiative. With the help of a Blandin "Get Broadband" Grant, the City initiated a series of meetings with citizens and community leaders and began to gauge community interest. The City heard from educators, public officials, businesses, health care providers, and homeowners, "we need ultra high-speed broadband, improved connectivity, and service to all areas of the community in order to stay competitive in a global marketplace."

Citizens, business owners, health care professionals, educators, representatives from our senior community, and government officials created a fiber taskforce and met over a two year



period to educate themselves and others on how fiber optics improve communications, promote economic development and make the deployment of other web-based services available to the community. This fiber taskforce has now evolved into a grass roots advocacy group called "Fiber Now". Presentations by city staff and the Fiber Now group to local governmental boards, commissions, service clubs, and civic organizations took place. Many local residents had questions and concerns regarding why certain areas of our city remain unserved and if improved services and pricing would be available anytime in the future. Education has been the primary focus of the advocacy group while city staff continues to explore viable business models.

On November 23, 2008, the Red Wing City Council accepted and approved a Fiber to the Premise Feasibility Study that researched high level architecture design, legal, financing, marketing, and governance. The study proved that there are a range of business models that Red Wing could utilize in a city network and as such, the city began to pursue a public/private partnership in which the city would build the fiber optic infrastructure and partner with a private company to offer services. The City of Red Wing is currently exploring a private partner to provide core services: Voice, Video, and Data on a municipally owned fiber optic network.

In conclusion, the current state of our fiber optic network is inadequate to support our community's needs. The current incumbent service providers have expressed an unwillingness to make the necessary investments. As leaders we must consider where we want to be in the next five to ten years and how we are going to get Red Wing there. We recognize that for Red Wing to remain competitive in the future robust fiber based communications systems must be available. Rural communities like Red Wing cannot afford to wait for incumbent service providers to build out the fiber optic infrastructure needed to remain competitive in a national and international economy. Red Wing citizens, business leaders, and government officials have taken an active role in pursuing solutions to provide an infrastructure that passes every home and every business, putting the groundwork in place for an ultra high-speed broadband network for everyone. We again ask for your assistance in promoting the same. Please contact Ms. Laura Blair, Red Wing Information Technology Director at (651) 385-3699, if you have any questions or need additional information.

We appreciate your support.

Sincerely,

Michael Schultz
Council President, Red Wing, Minnesota

cc: Mayor John Howe
City Council Members of Red Wing
Kay Kuhlmann, Council Administrator
Laura Blair, Information Technology Director

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