

RESOLUTION #R- 21 -22

AUTHORIZATION OF COUNTY SUPPORT FOR PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION (PSC) BROADBAND GRANTS

WHEREAS, broadband access is essential for economic development, virtual and lifetime learning, rural prosperity, and telehealth health services in Marathon County; and

WHEREAS, Marathon County has recognized the importance of broadband access in ensuring the health, safety and economic prosperity for all residents; and

WHEREAS, a significant portion of the county is currently “unserved” and “underserved” in terms of access to reliable and adequate broadband services; and

WHEREAS, the County has recognized the need to play a role in enhancing broadband access to its residents based on the findings and work done in association with the 2009 Broadband Gap Analysis, the 2015 Broadband Connectivity Task Force Report, and the 2019 Broadband Assessment and Plan prepared by Design Nine; and

WHEREAS, based on meetings and discussions with Internet Service Providers and evaluating the recommendations of Design Nine the County Board created a Broadband Task Force and charged it with identifying strategies, partners and potential funding sources that will support the expansion of broadband services to underserved areas; and

WHEREAS, the State of Wisconsin has existing opportunities to expand broadband services through a Broadband Expansion Grant Program administered by the Wisconsin Public Service Commission (PSC); and

WHEREAS, to assist PSC grant applicants, the Marathon County Broadband Task Force has recommended a policy of providing forgivable loans to PSC grant applicants whose proposed use of grant funds will benefit Marathon County. These forgivable loans would be in the amount of \$235 per unit for each applicant. Each loan would be forgiven upon activation of the broadband system within Marathon County created, expanded, or updated by grant funds. These loans would be provided based upon the applications and materials submitted and considered at the Marathon County Broadband Task Force meeting of February 28, 2022; and

WHEREAS, to further assist PSC grant applicants, the Marathon County Broadband Task Force has recommended a policy of making low interest loans available to PSC grant applicants whose expenditures will exceed \$235 per unit and whose proposed use of grant funds will benefit Marathon County. These loans would be for the non-PSC and non-county share of these projects; and

WHEREAS, these recommended loans would be available to applicants through American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds, an allowable use of funds pursuant to ARPA expenditure categories 5.16 and 5.17 and Section 602(c)(1)(D) of the Social Security Act as amended.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Marathon County Human Resources, Finance, and Property Committee and the Marathon County Executive Committee authorize appropriate county officials to act under this resolution to convey County support for and commit County resources to broadband service expansion applications that satisfy the criteria established by the Marathon County Broadband Task Force.

County officials are also authorized to work with and support grant applicants through suitable means they have determined to be most advantageous to the interests of Marathon County within the constraints of the Budget approved by the County Board.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Marathon County Human Resources, Finance, and Property Committee, the Marathon County Executive Committee, and the Marathon County Board authorize county officials to provide forgivable loans in the amount of \$235 per unit to PSC grant applicants whose proposed use of grant funds will benefit Marathon County and as further defined in the applications and materials submitted and considered at the Marathon County Broadband Task Force meeting of February 28, 2022.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Marathon County Human Resources, Finance, and Property Committee, the Marathon County Executive Committee, and the Marathon County Board authorize county officials to make available low interest loans available to PSC grant applicants whose proposed use of grant funds will benefit Marathon County for the non-PSC and non-county share of these projects under the terms and conditions as defined by the Marathon County Broadband Task Force.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that these recommended loans are authorized through American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds, an allowable use of funds pursuant to ARPA expenditure categories 5.16 and 5.17 and Section 602(c)(1)(D) of the Social Security Act as amended.

HUMAN RESOURCES, FINANCE AND PROPERTY COMMITTEE

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EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

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