

Town of Otter Creek – Wed., July 7, 2021
Otter Creek Town Hall - E5905 County Road S., Wheeler, WI
Special Town Board Meeting – 5:00 p.m.

Attendees:

Chairman Mark Warner*
Supervisor 1 Cecil Hayes*
Supervisor 2 LeAnn Ralph*

Guest: Preston Pearson from Mosaic Telecom

*Board Members

SPECIAL TOWN BOARD MEETING

The Special Town Board Meeting was called to order by Chairman Warner at 5:00 p.m. on Wednesday, July 7, 2021. The Clerk had posted notices of the Special Town Board Meeting on the Town website, and on the Town Hall Door.

American Rescue Plan Act funds — The Town of Otter Creek received \$27,737.17 on June 25, 2021, with the 2nd half of payment (\$27,737.17) to be deposited in June, 2022, for a total grant of \$55,474.34.

Preston Pearson of Mosaic Telecom spoke about Mosaic's plan to finish installing fiber optic Internet access in the remainder of the Town of Otter Creek. Through an earlier state grant that was awarded to Mosaic, the company is now working on installing fiber optic cable in the northeast half of the Town of Otter Creek.

Mosaic is writing six grant applications to take advantage of the federal American Rescue Plan Act funds (ARPA) of which Otter Creek is one application. The proposal is to finish installing fiber optic cable in the southwest half of the Town of Otter Creek. The expansion would provide broadband access to an additional 76 homes in the township.

Mosaic is asking for the ARPA funds allotted to the Town of Otter Creek so the information can be included on the grant application so Mosaic can receive the points on the grant score for the public-private partnership. Governor Tony Evers announced May 18, 2021, that the Public Service Commission of Wisconsin will launch an additional round of broadband expansion funding, and the governor has appropriated \$100 million of the ARPA funds received by the state of Wisconsin for broadband expansion.

The Mosaic grant application, which is due July 27, 2021, will ask for \$868,700 in state money, with \$50,000 from the Town of Otter Creek and \$103,300 from Mosaic for a total project cost of \$1.022 million.

Mosaic also is asking the Town of Otter Creek to waive the permit fees for installing fiber optic cable on the town's right-of-way. The Otter Creek Town Board approved waiving the permit fees for the Sand Creek project as part of the public-private partnership information that Mosaic included on the previous grant application.

To date, Mosaic has applied for three grants for broadband expansion and has received three grants. Mosaic is a cooperative, which gives the company an advantage on grant applications because cooperatives receive points for being cooperatives.

Mosaic has approached Dunn County about using some of the county's ARPA funds to expand broadband to the north Tainter Lake area and east to the Village of Colfax. Pearson reported that Dunn County officials were not receptive to the request, so the Town of Otter Creek would be the only town in Dunn County included on the grant application.

The other grant applications for Mosaic would include projects north of Dunn County. When asked if Mosaic would come back to an Otter Creek project at a later date if the company did not apply for grant funds to do the project now, Pearson said it would not be likely since there are no guarantees that any grant money will be available for broadband expansion in the future.

The Otter Creek Town Board discussed the economic benefits for town residents of having fiber optic Internet available, which will open up opportunities for telecommuting. Fiber optic Internet also opens up opportunities for education, both for students in grade school and high school as well as adults who want to attend university or college classes on-line. When asked about the increase in property values for the entire Town of Otter Creek to have fiber optic available, Pearson said property values generally increase between 3 percent and 5 percent.

If Mosaic is awarded the grant, construction on the Otter Creek project must be completed by December of 2024, although Mosaic would plan to install the fiber optic cable in 2022.

Pearson provided a sample resolution to the Otter Creek Town Board for Mosaic's broadband proposal and the use of the town's ARPA funds.

Motion made by Ralph and seconded by Warner to move forward with the Mosaic proposal and put the resolution for the ARPA funds on the town board's agenda for consideration at the July 13, 2021, meeting. Motion carried. Warner — aye. Hayes — aye. Ralph — aye.

Motion to adjourn by Ralph, seconded by Warner and carried. The meeting adjourned at 5:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

LeAnn R. Ralph

Supervisor 2

Otter Creek Town Board