



MINUTES

QLife Regular Board Meeting
Thursday, June 23, 2022
Harding House Conference Room
and Google Hangouts

Call to Order President Weinstein calls the meeting to order at 12:01 PM.

Roll Call Lee Weinstein, Scott Hege, Rod Runyon, Scott Randall, Dale Lepper, John Amery, Joseph Franell, Justin Brock, Alex Kelley, Natasha Blaircobb, Keith Mobley, Dan McNeely, Tyler Stone, Stephanie Krell, Matthew Klebes and Mike Middleton.

Changes to the Agenda

There are no changes to the agenda.

[[Mr. Hege moves to approve the agenda. Mr. Lepper seconds the motion, which passes unanimously.]]

President Weinstein reviews the QLife Strategic Plan and reminds every one of the goals and mission.

Rural Innovation Strategies, Inc. Presentation

Mr. Klebes introduces Mr. Kelley to the board and briefly reviews the work the Qlife team and RISI team have done together. Mr. Kelley notes that RISI is a non-profit, rural focused firm. He worked with Qlife staff for the past year and he will be presenting an update to the board. Mr. Kelley presents his slide deck included in the packet.

Mr. Kelley's top recommendations include: (1) Approach network expansions with a committed partner and draft agreement in place before funding is secured and construction begins; (2) Let balance of risk and risk tolerance guide partnership framework and negotiations; (3) Consider making QLife's rate framework private; (4) Consider mechanisms to encourage long-term contracts to ensure stability and minimize risk.

Mr. Kelley's recommendations for next steps include: identify target grant opportunities and collaborate on excel model use. Also, he believes we need to review our rate framework and discuss expansion opportunities with potential ISP partners.

Mr. Klebes refers to page 25 in the packet and points out that Simnasho is included in the design because there is interest in coordinating with Warm Springs. They have not yet responded to requests and appearances on the Tribal Council Agenda has been rescheduled several times. He also notes that the design does not run directly from BPA Bakeoven to Maupin because we are hopeful that we can utilize fiber through Avangrid and the solar development partnership that is already in place. The tools that Mr. Kelley mentioned require data on existing infrastructure, which will better inform the model, cost revenue and eventual grant request. Mr. Amery clarifies that we will be building middle-mile to the communities with population density but not connecting every household along the way.

Mr. Hege asks if we could create a partnership with an ISP so that we build middle-mile and the ISP can build last mile connections and Mr. Klebes confirms that having an end service partner is a key component and requirement for the grant.

Mr. Hege asks how we identify grant opportunities and Mr. Kelley said that there are a number of grants coming down the pike and QLife should prioritize the one that has the best chance for success. Mr. Klebes adds that previously, we applied for the Pine Hollow, Tygh Valley and Wamic run. We will probably prioritize that again, especially if we have a committed ISP partner but there are other opportunities. Conditions of existing poles along the route are also

important and can make us more competitive. Mr. Hege asks when we design for the project, if we planning to utilize Co-op poles and Mr. Klebes confirms that we are.

Mr. Amery informs the board that the NTIA middle-mile grant application was recently advertised and believes it fits well as a priority segment. Mr. Runyon adds that we should prioritize the area where the highest population would be served. Mr. Kelley notes that the NTIA grant is a good opportunity but is competitive. The next round of state grants should have a smaller pool of applicants. Mr. Klebes adds that the State of Oregon may apply to the NTIA grant and invite us to participate too.

Mr. Hege expresses concern over going after the same grant project again since we were not successful last time. Mr. Franell explains that the QLife application was part of a larger application from the state, which included other projects. One project in particular was contested and it seems that the state application was not approved because of that project. It is normal to have to go after grant funding two or three times before success and Mr. Franell says that he would not hesitate in submitting it again.

Mr. Hege supports Mr. Kelley's recommendations and wants to move forward on grant opportunities to provide service to someone that does not have it today.

Mr. Stone asks if we are going to continue this process with RISI and wonders if we have had a conversation with Google about their continued support. Mr. Kelley is confident that Google will continue support and will approach them about that.

Mr. Hege asks how we make a more secure rate framework and Mr. Klebes responds that if we make changes to rates, we can have an opportunity to secure them. Our current rate structure is already public. Mr. Hege asks if it would be beneficial to inform people about this report and Mr. Klebes responds that the map may be the most helpful in communicating potential opportunities.

President Weinstein adds that messaging and speaking with the media about this would be valuable.

Action Items

Jefferson Damage OPC

Mr. Amery and Mr. McNeely inform the board that there are two spots on the map identified as having bad fiber and the best solution is to bypass it. The opinion of probable cost is \$65,721.60 and will take three days to re-route. Mr. Weinstein asks if we have funds in the budget to cover the repair and Mr. Klebes confirms that we do in the capital fund. The repair is critical to customers on the line and it has been an issue in the past. Mr. Klebes asks for a motion from the board to put the project out to bid and bring quotes back to the board.

[[Mr. Hege moves to approve going forward with putting the Jefferson Damage Repair Project out to bid. Mr. Lepper seconds the motion, which passes unanimously.]]

Approval of the Consent Agenda

[[Mr. Hege moves to approve the consent agenda. Mr. Lepper seconds the motion, which passes unanimously.]]

Finance Report

Financial Report, Analysis and Reconciliation

Mr. Middleton presents the May finance report to the board included in the packet and remarks that we are approaching the end of the fiscal year and he has no budgetary concerns. Contracted legal services are still a little high, but have discussed the reasons why at prior meetings. The revenue for Maupin was budgeted at \$7,300 currently has \$8,900. All funds are in good positions.

Discussion Items

MCEDD/BAT Broadband Survey

Ms. Blaircobb introduces herself as the RARE AmeriCorps member working at MCEDD. She explains that MCEDD and the BAT put together a broadband survey and will start collecting responses from people in Wasco County and push outward to get a more regional view of broadband.

Mr. Hege asks if we have discussed this with Wasco Electric as well as Northern Wasco PUD and Ms. Blaircobb explains that Carrie Pipinich is spearheading those conversations but is unsure whom she has communicated with so far. Mr. Hege remarks that the speed test itself is not very helpful but that it is important to test at a location where they need services, like their homes.

Mr. Amery wonders if there is a way to capture the reliability of the connection too and Ms. Blaircobb responds that some survey questions deal with the primary reason for internet use, speed and if connectivity is meeting their needs with the options to expand if it is not.

President Weinstein adds that they are looking for locations to drop of flyers, particularly in Shaniko, Antelope, Wamic, Pine Hollow, Pine Grove and Tygh Valley,

Administration Updates

Mr. Klebes informs the board they he has successfully contacted the city of Maupin to discuss the Wi-Fi system and transferring the cost over to them moving forward. It went well.

Klindt Drive is moving forward with final design work and we will put the project out to bid soon.

Mr. Klebes will be meeting with consultants from MCEDD to do design work on the collocation facility immediately following the board meeting. The MCEDD grant is associated with COVID dollars, which need to be expended by the end of the month. He will bring the report back to the board for discussion.

We are waiting on a final notice of award for the RFP with the school district. There are other connection opportunities that we may secure to continue the fiber build further down the street.

Blue Mountain Fiber has placed fiber for the Liberty Street Project and we performed a final walkthrough. Things are looking good and the project is ready to be closed out.

The Dry Hollow project is also close to completion and all work is satisfactory.

Mr. Klebes remarks that a feasibility study for the underground project is complete. If it moves forward, it will impact QLife and other ISPs between 1st and 2nd Streets.

Aristo Technical Management Report

Mr. Amery presents his technical report to the board and states that we have engaged with North Sky for splicing of the previously mentioned projects into the QLife backbone.

Oregon Telecommunications Conference

Ms. Krell informs the board that the dates are set for the Oregon Telecommunications Conference for October 6 and 7 in Ashland. She asks if anyone has interest in attending. Mr. Mobley adds that he plans to attend and believes it is worth attending.

The meeting is adjourned at 1:32 PM

The next regularly scheduled board meeting is set for July 28, 2022.

These minutes were approved by the QLife Board on July 28, 2022.

Rod Runyon, Secretary