

News Release

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Greene County Plans Investment in Broadband Capabilities

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

WAYNESBURG – The Greene County Commissioners are planning to invest between \$1 million and \$1.6 million toward increased broadband capabilities. High on their priorities, the Commissioners have been working on a plan and coordinating with industry partners to increase broadband availability and reliability. Due to that planning, a recently completed feasibility study and availability of Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (“CARES Act”) funding, the county is positioned to significantly increase broadband availability and capability in a relatively short period of time. This project is to be completed by December 30, 2020.

Rural internet capability is a hot topic in Greene County. Especially now, amid a pandemic when businesses are encouraged to increase telecommuting opportunities and families are wrestling with decisions between traditional schooling, home schooling or cyber schooling, reliable internet service has never been more important. Greene County Commissioner Betsy McClure stated, “Just like water, electricity and sewer services, we view internet access, speed and reliability of service an infrastructure requirement. It is required not only to serve our current residents and businesses, but also to provide opportunities for future growth and economic development in Greene County.”

In early January the Greene County Commissioners began a new effort to increase availability of broadband services throughout the county. Although many headlines have made promises and claimed progress over time, there have been limited increases in capabilities and never a comprehensive, effective plan established. A new focus on partnerships and cooperative planning initiated a feasibility study that was conducted by experts of the industry.

The feasibility study established current services available, as well as, opportunities for the most efficient and effective technologies to improve internet connectivity throughout large portions of the county. The study consisted of an on-line speed survey, a survey mailed to select geographic areas and an in-depth analysis of known equipment, technology and hardware associated with current broadband capabilities. Examination of accumulated data will provide an opportunity to apply the most effective technology in the most efficient manner increasing broadband availability to the largest population of users.

The Commissioners are considering installation of new services or upgrades to current available services in and around Brave, Graysville, Rogersville and Waynesburg affecting available service, speed and reliability to more than 1,550 homes in 9 of 26 municipalities, geographically representing 35 percent of the county. This improvement will be completed by the first of the year. Working with industry partners to increase availability and service in Monongahela, Dunkard, and Perry Townships

in the near future, will bring the total of Greene County municipalities gaining improved broadband service to 50 percent in the short-term.

Greene County has also applied for an additional \$5 million through the Redevelopment Assistance Capital Program (RACP) in order to continue broadband improvements into the most rural areas of Greene County. RACP is a Commonwealth grant program administered by the Office of the Budget for the acquisition and construction of regional economic, cultural, civic, recreational, and historical improvement projects.

Mike Belding, Chairman of the Greene County Commissioners said, “The importance of internet availability and reliability has been highlighted by the pandemic from the requirement to homeschool to telemedicine services, but we have known for years that internet is now a requirement for all households and businesses. We cannot just throw money at this issue. A comprehensive plan is required to ensure efficiency and effectiveness in future broadband deployment. These new initiatives and future plans will go a long way toward pulling Greene County into a future where internet availability and reliability is competitive with that of our neighboring counties.”

Armed with the analysis from the feasibility study, a comprehensive plan, established relationships with industry experts, currently available funding and planned future investments in broadband, the Greene County Commissioners are committed to significant increases in broadband availability in the near future.

Additional information can be obtained on the Greene County Commissioner’s Facebook page or by calling (724) 852-5210.