

**City of New Bern
Board of Aldermen Special Meeting
April 5, 2021 – 9:00 A.M.
City Hall Executive Conference Room
300 Pollock Street**

Mayor Outlaw opened the meeting with prayer.

Roll Call: Mayor Dana Outlaw; Aldermen Sabrina Bengel, Jameesha Harris (via telephone), Robert Aster, Johnnie Ray Kinsey, Barbara Best, and Jeffrey Odham. Absent: None. A quorum was present.

Also in Attendance: Mark Stephens, City Manager; Michael Scott Davis, City Attorney (via telephone); Jaimee Bullock-Mosley, Assistant City Attorney; and Brenda Blanco, City Clerk.

1. Consider Adopting a Resolution Authorizing the City Manager to Negotiate and Execute an Agreement with Metro Fibernet, LLC.

Mr. Stephens explained the agreement with Metro Fibernet, LLC (“MetroNet”) was more of an understanding regarding expectations from the City and clarification with respect to the permitting process. This will be a mass-scale project for which MetroNet would like to submit large plans at one time, instead of having to individually permit each location. MetroNet will provide five free connections to the City, one of which will be at the Stanley White Recreation Center. Mr. Stephens pointed out MetroNet could enter into the local market without the agreement, as could any other utility, since the City does not have franchise authority.

(Alderman Kinsey momentarily left the room at 9:05 a.m., returning at 9:06 a.m.)

Mayor Outlaw noted MetroNet’s presence would not just effect residents of the City of New Bern, but would also benefit surrounding areas. Charlie Bauschard, Director of Public Utilities, stated the initial agreement would not impact the City’s electric utilities, but in the future a full pole attachment agreement would be negotiated. Mayor Outlaw felt the service provided by MetroNet would be a win-win for everyone.

Expressing concern about the potential cost to low-income households, Alderman Best questioned the price point and whether the cost for service would continue to increase over time. Mr. Stephens noted the City would have no influence on the cost or services provided. Mayor Outlaw noted the City had expressed to MetroNet its desire that students have internet service available to them.

Alderman Aster inquired as to how soon MetroNet would begin installation, noting citizens have a great interest in switching to their service. Mr. Stephens briefly explained the process, noting the initial plans should be submitted to the City in the fall. The services to be provided by MetroNet will include, in part, video service

of up to 240 channels, fiber internet with speeds up to 1/1 Gbps, fiber phone with up to 17 custom calling features, wireless home networking, and business services to include a hosted PBX and IPTV.

Alderman Odham said the escalating costs and inconsistencies from Suddenlink were due to the fact Suddenlink was basically the only provider in town and customers had no choice. He then questioned whether the "no-cost" permitting was acceptable. Mr. Davis responded that the fees are just as listed, unless the Board wanted to change its fee structure. However, his recollection was the City did not have an established fee for encroachment agreements. Mr. Davis stated the last issue being fine tuned was a certificate of appropriateness for any facility above ground. The City does have a minor charge for those certificates.

Recounting that all the Board had heard from citizens and seen the emailed complaints, Alderman Bengel reported that the City reached out to MetroNet to find resources. It is a free-market system that will work itself. If MetroNet fails, it is because the market did not support it. Thanks was expressed to Mayor Outlaw for his leadership and to everyone else for working to make the matter a priority.

Alderman Best asked about the possibility of a reduced rate for low-income families. Mr. Bauschard responded that the business development staff at MetroNet had indicated some reduced rates would be available for low-income households. Mr. Stephens also noted the City would be receiving \$6.5 million in COVID relief funds. The City will look at ways to utilize that funding, one of which could be broadband, if the Board desires.

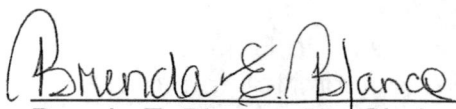
Alderman Bengel made a motion to adopt a resolution authorizing the City Manager to negotiate and execute an agreement with Metro Fibernet, LLC, seconded by Alderman Kinsey. Upon a roll-call vote, the motion carried unanimously 7-0

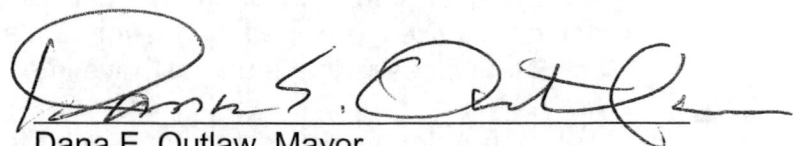
2. Adjourn.

Alderman Odham made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Alderman Kinsey. The motion carried unanimously, time being 9:26 a.m.

NOTE: For additional details and information on the Board of Aldermen meetings, please visit the City of New Bern's website at www.newbernnc.gov. Video and audio recordings of the meeting have been archived.

Minutes approved: April 13, 2021.


Brenda E. Blanco, City Clerk


Dana E. Outlaw, Mayor