



GOVERNOR'S
EMPOWER RURAL IOWA
INITIATIVE

Governor's Empower Rural Iowa Initiative
Connecting Rural Iowa Task Force Meeting Minutes
Conference Call
Monday, July 13, 2020
3:45 p.m.

1) Roll Call:

Present:	Lt. Governor Gregg	Sandy Ehrig	Dave Duncan	Ryan Boone
	Caleb Housh	Kevin Cabbage	Bill Anderson	Katie LaBree
	Tom Petersen	Steve Simons	Kevin Kinney	Patty Manuel
	Stacy Stewart	Barb Baker		

- 2) Approval of Minutes:** Draft minutes from the November 6, 2019 meeting had been previously distributed for review. Dave Duncan made a motion to approve and Ryan Boone seconded. Passed unanimously.

3) Welcome Remarks & Legislative Updates from Lt. Governor Gregg:

The Lt. Governor recognized Dave Duncan for his leadership of the Connecting Iowa task force and announced it would be wound down. There will be new charges for the Investing and Growing task forces.

Legislative Update: The second ERI bill passed unanimously, which included some changes that were recommended by this task force including increasing the incentive match to 35%. Fifty percent of funds allotted to projects with speeds 100/20, other half for projects less, but still higher than 25/4. Helps encourage faster networks but also incentive to provide service to the underserved.

Received \$5 million of state funds as last year. Due to the interruption of session, legislation was approached differently with the passing of a continuing resolution which kept all appropriations at last year's level unless they were addressed in the shortened session. The Federal CARES Act provided funding to each state and Iowa got \$1.52 billion which will go to the Small Business Relief Grants, backfilling the employment trust fund, and the Governor has also dedicated significant funds to broadband which has been demonstrated to be so necessary over the past few months. Additionally, the Governor's Economic Recovery Advisory Board also includes a sub-task force on connectivity and Dave D. will serve on that sub-committee.

4) Remarks from Sandy Ehrig:

It was two year's ago this month that we launched ERI in Winterset. We've done a lot of work and have accomplished much since then. IRDC has been happy to be part of the leadership team working with the Governor and Lt. Governor. Our group has grown – there is a spotlight on rural which is exciting. This year's Rural Summit will be virtual on August 20 and 21. Weekly updates from Bill includes registration info or you can check out the IRDC website. Agenda includes many issues that came to light in ERI. You can register as an individual or \$150 for a community team of five.

5) Task Force Updates:

Connecting Task Force: Lt. Governor: We have raised the broadband profile in a way not done before. We passed two pieces of policy, received \$10 million in broadband funding, will be receiving CARES allocation. There are more capabilities going to broadband expansion now, so it would be hard to have a conversation on rural broadband alone when another group is talking on a statewide basis.

Dave D: Thanks to all on the call. We've had a lot of meetings across the state, you've all played a significant role and represent a wide variety of interests and industries. We started with a 5-point action plan and I'm hopeful we can say we accomplished on all five. As we look at the Economic Recovery Advisory Board, they have broken into groups and there are about twenty people on the connectivity group, different state interests including education, libraries, Iowa League of Cities, etc. First meeting was today and he is pleased to be able to participate and he will serve as a resource as you follow the progress.

Lt. Governor: It shows that the discussion isn't over, it's just transferring. The sub-group will build on the foundation this task force has created. There is a very short timeline. Not a lot to discuss from a policy side, now how to implement. Your service on behalf of rural Iowa doesn't need to be over. There will be other opportunities to serve on other task forces.

Growing Task Force: Planned a leadership exchange event, a conference for communities to start or maintain leadership. Plans are to continue to move forward. Will look at policy issues on how to encourage young professionals to locate and stay in rural Iowa. Some examples to look at are the new large vet program, rural dentistry, rural mental health residencies. Inventory what is available and fill gaps.

Investing Task Force: Has looked at housing and dilapidated buildings, but housing will also be a sub-group of the Economic Recovery Advisory Board so now looking at how to support rural entrepreneurs – encourage online business presence, rural business succession.

There will be a new task force created to address rural EMS needs. We need to meet expectation that help will be available across the state when needed. Will be announcing applications soon.

Questions?

Ryan B: Thanks for having him serve. The first meeting of sub-group is happening right now. Do you see the committee going past that? Lt. Governor: It's too soon to say. Other groups are looking at how government serves people and how to drive economic development more strategically. Similar model – crafted in response to the pandemic. Want to use that as a launching pad to make the state strategically better. Big moments often bring opportunity.

6) Grant Program Updates - Liesl:

Very appreciative of all the work of members. She'll still be in touch and reaching out for expertise moving forward.,

The Rural Innovation Grants will be rolled out tomorrow. The way the budget was approached there is no changes to amounts. \$300,000 and \$100,000.

We hit the July 1st goal with 23 grants total, 17 for Rural Innovation and 6 for Housing. For the rural the cap was \$300,000. Housing was \$100,000 and some applicants asked for less so there is still \$40,000 to grant in that program. Plan to do another round this fall. Not surprised at this as budgets are a concern. We do expect to award the remaining funds, and timing is actually good for ISU partnership as they move to virtual.

Shout to Barb helping to review the applications. Really excited to have them formally announced tomorrow. There is a webpage that is live with info on the ERI webpage.

7) Public Comment:

None

8) Wrap up & Next Steps – Lt. Governor:

We have so many outstanding rural leaders, hopes this doesn't end your service as there are other ways to be involved. You are too good of a group to not have you engaged so let's find some ways to make that happen. Really appreciate your work, which helped put us in a much stronger position in the state.

9) Adjourn