



Board of County Commissioners

County of Hunterdon
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MEDIA RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Hunterdon Commissioners Take Initial Step To Expand Highspeed Broadband In County

Hunterdon County's Commissioners, at the October 19th meeting, approved a contract with the State of New Jersey certified communications infrastructure company Crown Castle, to provide expanded internet connection services for county government facilities, that can also provide for future expansion of high-speed broadband access availability throughout the county.

Commissioner Director John E. Lanza stated, "The Commissioner Board directed Hunterdon County staff to identify a replacement to its existing microwave network that had reached the end of its useful life, resulting in the Board's decision to invest in a high-speed fiber optic network.

The company's plan for running 9.65 miles of fiber, as well as adding a small internal cell tower, will strengthen internet service at County facilities, benefiting the public through improved access to County services. The infrastructure improvement represents an initial step as part of a longer-term strategy to expand access to high-speed internet throughout the county."

Crown Castle's contract was awarded through the state contract bid program.

The Commissioner Board's Deputy Director Zach Rich added, "Rather than just address the County government's own operational needs, the Board is seeking a solution that has great potential for a residual public benefit. Businesses and residents may be able to access the internet through new providers who take advantage of the new fiber optic lines."

Commissioner Susan J. Soloway, the Board's liaison to the Department of Public Safety noted, "One of the challenges of the County's existing microwave network is that it is vulnerable to weather fade during rain and snow events.

As liaison to the Department of Public Safety, I am proud to support the contract approval because the Board is advised it will enhance the Communication Center's E911 critical infrastructure and create a nearly 100% guaranteed uptime network."

During the height of the COVID-19 public health emergency, the Commissioners heard from local officials and residents alike about struggles with internet connectivity in relatively rural parts of the County.

Commissioner Shaun C. Van Doren, a member of the Board's Budget Committee, noted during the meeting, "With the existing microwave system at the end of its useful life, now is the time to implement this upgrade that will offer speeds of up to 10g. And the contract is cost effective."



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The County's contract with Crown Castle is \$145,200 annually for five years, which just \$10,000 more than the \$716,652 cost for the present microwave service.

Van Doren pointed out, "Another net benefit of the investment in the fiber optic network is that Crown Castle can market access to the fiber expansion to companies like AT&T, Verizon, and T-Mobile which would pay the County a fee for that service."

Commissioner Jeff Kuhl, a Hunterdon County multigenerational business owner, and co-liaison to the Department of Economic Development and Tourism added, "I am pleased about the potential of the private sector having access to an additional 9.65 miles of commercially viable fiber optic infrastructure for highspeed internet and private data lines."

Crown Castle is a leading provider of technology with 25+ years of experience owning and operating network assets. With nearly 5,000 employee and 85,000 miles of fiber under management, Crown Castle is utilized and respected by Fortune 500 companies, hospitals, schools, and governments across the United States.

The agreement with Crown Castle follows another important investment by the Commissioner Board in the creation of the County's first full-time vocational school which will be located at the North Hunterdon High School campus. The new facility will be funded through a 75% grant from the State of New Jersey and the remaining 25% will be offset with County funds that have been set aside thanks to careful financial planning. No County debt will be issued for the project.

In reflecting on these investments Commissioner Director John E. Lanza noted, "The Board is laying the foundation for Hunterdon County's long-term economic vitality and sustainability."