



July 8, 2021

Office of the Chief Information Officer  
200 E Grand Ave  
Des Moines, Iowa 50309

RE: Empower Rural Iowa Broadband Grant Program

To Whom it May Concern:

On behalf of the Johnson County Farm Bureau, this letter is in support of the Sharon Telephone Company (STC) and their Empower Rural Iowa Broadband Grant application. We would like to express our full support of their application. The rural areas contained within the targeted area are underserved for internet at any speed let alone high-speed broadband. The current Covid 19 pandemic has brought to light a need that has existed for some time. Virtual education of our youth, and adults working from home has been a huge challenge for all across this state. Without broadband internet access, those challenges are insurmountable. The targeted area contains approximately 80 households that when installed would finally have the ability to utilize a service that many Iowans take for granted.

The agriculture sector in that targeted area will benefit greatly from broadband access allowing access to markets, information and consultants that will be instant. Agriculture has always been competitive and broadband access will now level the playing field for those that continue to produce food and fiber in the targeted area.

STC has a long and successful history of providing state-of-art broadband service at advanced speeds to other rural communities, as well as a strong reputation for excellent customer service and community commitment. We are confident in their capabilities of enhancing broadband service for rural Riverside residents. The STC Board of Directors is committed to expanding broadband network and willing to invest in infrastructure that will enable us to overcome geographical distances, empower us through information, and bring the world to us through the touch of a keyboard. Had this area been highly populated, firms would have already found the return on investment to exist and installed fiber.

This State of Iowa grant is exactly what is needed to bridge the financial gap, encourage investment to occur while providing a much-needed service to rural Iowa. We urge your consideration and subsequent approval of the STC's Empower Rural Iowa Broadband Grant application. The residents and those involved in production agriculture would greatly appreciate broadband access.

Sincerely,  
Norm Ziskovsky, President  
Johnson County Farm Bureau



# MID-PRAIRIE COMMUNITY SCHOOL DISTRICT

## Mission Statement

*Preparing today's students for tomorrow's world in a caring learning environment.*  
www.mphawks.org

### Central Office

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Wellman, IA 52356  
319.646.6093  
Fax 319.646.2093  
Mark Schneider, Supt.

### High School

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319.646.6091  
Fax 319.646.6097  
Jay Strickland,  
Principal

### Middle School

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Kalona, IA 52247  
319.656.2243  
Fax 319.656.2207  
Marc Pennington,  
Principal

### Mid-Prairie East

702 6<sup>th</sup> St.  
Kalona, IA 52247  
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Robin Foster, Principal

### Mid-Prairie West

P.O. Box H  
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Bill Poock, Principal

### Alternative Learning Center

Wellman, IA 52356  
319.646.6096  
Amy Shalla, Principal

### Mid-Prairie Home School Education Center

1592 Angle Rd. SW.  
Kalona, IA 52247  
319.683.2280  
Rachel Kerns, Director

July 14, 2021

Office of the Chief Information Officer of the State of Iowa  
200 E Grand Ave.  
Des Moines, IA 50309  
Phone: (515) 281-5503

RE: Empower Rural Iowa, Broadband Expansion Grant Program – NOFA #006

Dear Chief Information Officer and Review Committee:

I am writing this letter on behalf of Sharon Telephone Company (STC). Mid-Prairie Community School District (MPCSD) and Sharon Telephone have a long history of working together in our rural community. MPCSD serves approximately 1900 students in Johnson, Washington, and Iowa Counties and is comprised of 215 square miles, incorporating the cities of Kalona, Wellman and West Chester, along with the surrounding rural areas.

Our district has a strong tradition of using vigorous and relevant curriculum that fosters higher order thinking skills, innovation through creative problem-solving, and student collaboration, in order to equip students with a growth mindset and the skills needed for tomorrow's world. Throughout the past two school years, MPCSD has become increasingly aware of the importance of broadband services, both in our buildings and in the homes of our students and faculty. STC has been fulfilling these needs for years and continues to enhance their fiber optic networks in rural areas which has greatly impacted the ability of our students and faculty to conduct at-home learning and remote teaching.

STC has a long and successful history of providing state-of-art broadband service at advanced speeds to our rural community and has a strong reputation for community commitment and customer service. Their staff is focused on customer service and providing services they stand behind. I am confident STC will be able to duplicate their success by providing high speed fiber optic services to underserved areas where broadband enhancements are essential, specifically the rural Lone Tree area.

Yours in service,

Mark Schneider, Superintendent

7-23-2021

Office of the Chief Information Officer of the State of Iowa  
200 E Grand Ave.  
Des Moines, IA 50309

Re: Empower Rural Iowa, Broadband Expansion Grant Program-NOFA #6

Dear Chief Information Office and Review Committee:

I would like to express to you the importance of the support of the Empower Rural Iowa, Broadband Expansion grant application for Sharon Telephone Company. This grant will enable the STC to continue to provide broadband services with advance speeds to those of us in the rural area surrounding their home base of Hills, Iowa to those of us in rural Lone Tree.

With this grant it will allow them to expand and overcome limitations we face each day in rural Iowa due to long distances between rural homes. As one of these homeowners and a business based in a rural setting, we require reliable access to broadband without interruption or delay in response for all kinds of tools the internet provides to us. As a business owner, all tax work is required to be done online and along with most of our business contacts requiring the use of a dependable service to access bids, invoices and payment services. In this rural setting it is a great benefit to be able to research for our clients and provide advice on products available to use, as well as, purchase for our clients' custom homes. With the increasing complexity and competition of the building market it demands for us to utilize the tools of video for our websites, as well as, zoom access to talk with clients as far as California.

During the mist of the pandemic, we also found the use of telehealth being necessary and required to access our medical care and continue to utilize this incredible tool to keep us healthy which again demands for us to have access to higher speeds with greater dependability.

As our surrounding community grows and with each addition of a new home, we are currently finding it more difficult to get the speeds and access without interruption due to the distances and terrain. It is essential as we depend on carriers like Sharon Telephone to continue to provide these services and to stay in touch with new technologies to help the residents of rural Lone Tree as we look into the future. I have no doubt with STC past history, they will be very successful as they advance their services through the grant you can provide.

Sincerely



Debbie Magruder  
Magruder Construction LLC/ Magruder Farm Corp  
4525 580<sup>th</sup> St SE  
Lone Tree, IA 52755  
319-629-5489

July 23, 2021

Empower Rural Iowa Broadband Grant Program:

As Superintendent of Schools of the Lone Tree Community School District, I know the importance of expanding access to state-of-the-art broadband services for teaching and learning. I would like to express my full support of the Empower Rural Iowa Broadband Grant Application for Sharon Telephone Company. They have a long and successful history of providing exceptional communications services within the State of Iowa. Sharon Telephone Company also has a strong reputation for excellent customer service and commitment.

The Lone Tree Community School District utilizes a broadband connections every day and it greatly enhances learning opportunities for our students in the classroom. Education will continue to evolve, and digital learning will continue to play a crucial role in the teaching and learning environment for our PK-12 students. It is critical for all students in our school district to have access to reliable, high-speed Internet, both at home and in the school building. Without enhanced broadband capabilities, the learning opportunities for a majority of our students will be greatly limited.

The lack of broadband to underserved communities is a great challenge to our district and has a direct impact on the future success of our students. Due to the rural nature of the Lone Tree area, students do not receive equitable broadband resources as compared to those in more urban areas. With this grant, Sharon Telephone Company's expansion of fiber broadband will help many of our rural students overcome this equity obstacle and provide opportunities for research, peer collaboration, distance learning, video, and reliable access to the tools needed for a successful educational program delivery.

This opportunity also provides the opportunity for rural school district to provide state of the art instruction at a fraction of the cost state and local competitors provide. Many companies use "last mile legislation" to forcibly constrict cost effective options for schools to receive economically feasible solutions to purchase access to broadband services.

Sharon Telephone Company has a long and successful history of providing state-of-the-art broadband service at advanced speeds to other rural communities and has a strong reputation for community commitment and customer service. I am confident in Sharon Telephone Company's capabilities of enhancing broadband service in rural Lone Tree, Iowa.

Sincerely,

*Kurt MJ DeVore*

Kurt MJ DeVore, Superintendent of Schools  
303 South Devoe St.  
Lone Tree, IA 52755  
(319) 629-4212