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TO: County Board of Commissioners
FROM: Lucas Dahling, Finance Director
SUBJECT: Rural Utilities Service (RUS) Reconnect Program Grant Update
DATE: July 21, 2026

The Finance Department led a Committee of the Whole Meeting on June 16, 2026 as a means to provide the Board of Commissioners an update on the progress of the project, identify and provide context for key issues, and seek further direction. This meeting went long and as a result was recessed until a future date. Staff paused all work on the project at that time.

Commissioner Flanders organized a follow up meeting occurring on June 24th. Attendees of the meeting included the Assistant Administrator of the RUS Telecommunications Program as well as other employees of the RUS, staff members from the Offices of US Senators Amy Klobuchar and Tina Smith, staff members from the Offices of US Representatives Angie Craig and Brad Finstad, Goodhue County Commissioners Susan Betcher and Linda Flanders, and representatives from the MN Department of Employment and Economic Development, NACo, AMC, Nuvera Communications, Inc., and Goodhue County staff members.

Key discussion topics were the issues identified during the COW meeting on June 16th. These include but are not limited to the collaborative work to date between Goodhue County and Nuvera, RUS contract inflexibility, insurance issues, liability issues, and the disallowance of the mutually agreed upon assignment agreement between Goodhue County and Nuvera. The RUS indicated they would re-review the agreement developed by Goodhue County and Nuvera and provide feedback.

County staff received a follow-up message from the RUS on July 6th acknowledging they are not party to the assignment agreement, however, they wished for two items to be further clarified in the agreement. Neither of these items are controversial. Additionally, the RUS has provided a draft operating agreement which includes a section for an eventual transfer of operating assets from the Primary Awardee to the Second Awardee.

Based on the appearance that the RUS now deems our agreement appropriate as well as the fact that they have provided implicit approval of the transfer of assets, staff have resumed work on this project to include revision of the assignment agreement as well as tailoring the operating agreement to our specific situation. Nuvera has not yet been notified of this progress as the drafting of these documents is ongoing.

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