Technology Report

E-rate

We are soon to be ready in the next few days to hit the final submit button on our e-rate applications for 2022-2023. First up are our applications for internet and wide area network connections. The district received no bids and we'll be working with Siyeh Communications to get their commitment for the upcoming year or give the opportunity to another company that could possibly lay their own fiber to give us internet services. In the network infrastructure side of e-rate we will have Form 470 applications going out to replace up to 30 of our network switches throughout the district. Also included will be language to invite companies into to lay what we refer to as dark fiber. Currently the district has dark fiber between BES, admin, Napi, KW, Vina and BHA buildings. Dark fiber is totally managed by us and we plug our network using our switches and make direct connections without an intermediary party. Our leased or 'lit' fiber connections are to Babb, BHS and BMS. There has been interest by companies to lay dark fiber for the district and the e-rate folks have re-evaluated approving these projects assuming 15 to 20-year life spans for the fiber projects. Additionally, there appears to be some state monies available so the cost to the district to install dark fiber connections to at least BHS and BMS could be zero. Will update in board reports as we progress through the bidding process.

Internet Access for students and low-income families

We are encouraging families to visit with the folks at Siyeh Communications about getting a subsidized internet connection for their residence. Recent CARES Act legislation passed into law makes up to $50 per month available to low income families to get internet access and up to $75 for those individuals living on tribal lands. Siyeh will work with families coming into the office and help them make application to USAC/E-Rate and see if they qualify. There are several federal programs that are automatic qualifiers such as Medicaid and SNAP along with some other assistance programs.

Another requirement is that Siyeh is able to get service to the house and most locations in the town of Browning area have that access along with some wireless options in the Starr School and other areas.

We encourage all families to apply now and not wait until there is a need. This is not restricted to families of students and is open to any and all, just stop by the Siyeh Communications office and they will help everyone coming in to apply. This also helps Siyeh getting more families signed up as they can show the need for services and assist them being able to pursue other grant opportunities to expand both their service area and reliability.