



We would like to take this opportunity to respond to questions we have received about our stance on the City of West Plains' launch of internet services as a "public utility." First and foremost, we are a citizen of West Plains, and we, like each of you, want West Plains, its residents and businesses to grow and prosper. We too believe that internet access is a necessity for daily life.

We take pride in being headquartered in Sullivan, Missouri, a short distance away, and in having a local business office that employs 16 persons residing in and around the City of West Plains. West Plains has been a great community for us, is one of our first "one Gig" communities, and certainly not our last. We offer one Gig service throughout the City for \$79 per month with no additional fees or promotional period. This rate is very competitive to the rate that Google charges in Kansas City. We are "small enough" to care about this community – and to call this community "our community" – but big enough to bring economies of scale and a well-informed perspective.

With confidence, we can state that the City of West Plains' elected and other government officials do as good of a job of advocating local business interests as any of the communities we serve. We have met with City officials and representatives of the Broadband Study Group a number of times to address questions and concerns about the services we provide. Our meetings and conversations began over two years ago. At that time, we offered internet speeds up to 125 Mbps, in the City limits. In our various meetings, the City and the Broadband Study Group expressed concern that we weren't providing service in a few areas, we weren't offering one Gig service (other than as a fiber-based service to certain businesses) and that we were charging special construction charges to reach certain businesses. We acknowledged and addressed those concerns. We agreed to serve any business within the City limits without charging any special construction costs. We have also increased speeds to all of our business customers several times, without charging additional fees. Moreover, we upgraded our equipment and facilities to provide one Gig service throughout the entire City limits. We also offered to partner with the City in serving the airport and industrial park located outside the City limits, in the pursuit of attracting businesses to the area to stimulate economic growth. In December of 2016, we met with the City and asked if there was anything else we could be doing? They said "No," and indicated that they were satisfied with our services.

Despite our efforts and investments, the City has constructed fiber, purchased equipment and engaged consultants to overbuild our infrastructure and compete against us. The City has taken these actions with only limited input from its residents, and certainly without a vote of the public. The City has no published business plan explaining how it will fund what will be the millions of dollars it will spend. To put matters into perspective, as of December 31, 2017, the City has spent over \$413,000 on its fiber project but has realized less than \$6,000 in revenue. The City is budgeted to spend another \$618,000 through the end of its current fiscal year, and, frankly, that amount is just the beginning. As of December 31, 2017 – with three months still left in the City's fiscal year – the City's overall expenses for the current year have exceeded its revenues by \$1.3M, demonstrating that the City currently operates at a financial loss.

The City of West Plains is not the first to consider providing internet access as a public utility. In fact, the City is aware that the overwhelming majority of those who have attempted it have failed. Under the guise of promoting local business, the City seems intent on pushing us out of town.

In an effort to reach out to the public and to tell the other side of the story, we have engaged a third party to launch and maintain a "Stop-City-Funded Internet" Facebook page and related stopcityfundedinternet.com website. Whether you are just learning about the City's internet initiative, support it or oppose it, we invite you to visit and follow those pages and to participate in the dialogue. As a concerned citizen, we truly believe the City will fail and will suffer substantial financial losses – just like the well-documented examples we have provided to the City.

It is our sincere hope to work with the City, its businesses and residents to continue to provide superior services within West Plains.