



11/18/21

Joshua Edgar  
Nebraska Public Service Commission  
1220 N Street, Suite 300  
Lincoln, NE 68508

Joshua,

This letter is in response to the CenturyLink challenge to the Inventive Wireless of Nebraska, LLC dba Vistabeam, Chappell Fiber Project.

Prior to the preparation of the application for the Chappell Fiber Project, our infrastructure team was unaware of CenturyLink's plans to construct fiber in the town of Chappell. In the months preceding the application deadline, our team had multiple meetings with Chappell community groups, including the City Council, and no one in those groups was aware of CenturyLink's plans to build fiber in Chappell. If CenturyLink does have the permits applied for and received, it was done without knowledge of the town council and in a way that minimized public notification.

Chappell has a long history of issues with their broadband service through CenturyLink, much of it documented in complaints to the Public Service Commission. Application No. C-5037/PI-223 reported between September 2018 to February 2019 there were 25 complaints from Chappell received by the Public Service Commission and that "Most complaints indicated consumers and businesses were experiencing service interruptions, some of which have lasted for multiple days." Complaints that reach the Commission are "the tip of the iceberg" and understate the true number of service issues. The Public Service Commission has held multiple hearings over the last few years with CenturyLink regarding service issues with the latest one on August 19<sup>th</sup> of 2020.

Vistabeam started offering service in the town of Chappell in 2017. Since that time, Vistabeam has upgraded backbone and last-mile equipment to offer 500Mb x 500Mb broadband service in the downtown area and 70Mb x 10Mb service to the entire town and a good portion of the area outside city limits. Vistabeam also

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turned down a Nebraska Internet Enhancement Fund grant when better wireless equipment became available that would outperform the coax cable system upgrade proposed in that grant. Despite receiving no support from any federal or state Universal Service programs, Vistabeam is now actively serving broadband to approximately 40% of the households in Chappell and has gained a positive reputation both in the town and in general, as reflected by a rating of 4.7 on Google and 4.8 on Facebook.

In stark contrast to CenturyLink's neglect for Chappell, Vistabeam made a clear commitment to providing a quality broadband service in the community. Vistabeam has had pole attachment agreements with Chappell for several years in anticipation of building fiber to every home in the city. Vistabeam has the engineering completed for this project and is preparing to start construction early next year with a West Nebraska based construction team. Our project design and timeline has been shared with community groups in Chappell and a waiting list for new fiber installations is already started. Any residence or business that can't wait for fiber can get a quality fixed wireless connection today and will be able to switch to a fiber connection when the fiber plant is completed. CenturyLink has received millions of dollars in support from federal and state universal service programs to essentially run the same DSL plant in Chappell for over a decade while eliminating local techs and support positions in Western Nebraska. No town in Nebraska should have to wait that long to get good broadband.

In conclusion, I ask the Commission to consider CenturyLink's poor track record of customer complaints and lack of investment in Chappell when ruling on this challenge. Committing to provide service at some point in the next 18 months is a lot easier than providing that service and taking care of the customers. Centurylink has been a bad investment for Nebraska, and especially for the community of Chappell. Vistabeam has made an extraordinary commitment to Chappell and will deliver the quality service and customer care that its citizens deserve.

Matt Larsen, CEO  
Vistabeam

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