

MATHEWS BROADBAND ADVISORY BOARD 24 NOVEMBER 2020 9:00 AM ZOOM MEETING



Present: Judy Rowe, Rob Quartel, Cynthia Hayes, Chuck Huntley, Greg Lewis, Willie Love, Joe Syslo, Donna Givens, Dee Russell, Jackie Ingram, Hal Bourque, Julie Kaylor, Thomas Jenkins, Jeff Beekhoo, Tyler Beekhoo, Deborah Falco, Sherry Hamilton, Nancy Keenan

MINUTES

The meeting was called to order by the Chair.

The Chair emailed the minutes. They were approved as corrected for attendance.

Big News from Jeff about the application being awarded to Mathews from the Governor's CARES Fund grant specifically for broadband: eight Smart Poles and 25 MiFis with antennae for a total of more than \$222,000.00. Jeff and team will be in Mathews to walk the sites on Tuesday, 1 December. Congratulations to Jeff and his team. Many thanks to citizens who have offered private property for pole sites.

How will people who will benefit be notified? Radio, newspaper, count website and social media will carry the information.

How can the public get access? Opening page will have some information. Jeff and Judy will work on this.

Tyler showed the map of the pole locations and also noted the possible tower at the MVRS location. Jeff reported that they are only waiting for agreement with Verizon.

Old Business:

The BAB and BTS were unable to present From Luxury to Necessity: Bridging the Digital Divide because of new pandemic restrictions. Jeff stated that when it is possible they will present the program.

In an email going to all Virginia counties, Julie Kaylor had the opportunity to share our plan for a special fund to handle money for broadband.

Lifeline program is still being pursued. Letters written to Wittman, Warner and Brendan Carr by Tiffany Gordon, Amy Dubois, Mindy Kaylor, Nancy Welch. Chris Hall is trying to find a way to help Mathews get the financial help for Mathews citizens.

Tyler reported that though Mathews was in the top five for receiving the \$15,000.00 ICMA , BRIDGING THE DIGITAL DIVIDE grant, a town in Texas got the award.

Our partnership with ABB to troubleshoot why potential customers are repeatedly told they cannot get service, only to learn later that they can. A classic case came to BAB from Melissa Wall. Sean Brushett(ABB) responded with great speed. Frank Berry(ABB) has contacted her and she is scheduled to get service.

Rob urged our getting the information out on the real issues of cost for providers. Julie reminded us it was not just return on investment but also ABB's capacity. They are increasing their head end facilities.

Future proofing is a brainstorming topic.

New Business:

Jeff Beekhoo reported on the development of the overall plan that Broadband Telecom Services is preparing for the county. Lacking regional connectivity, we need the pipe coming in to provide the capacity. Talking to Segra and Tenebris Fiber, middle-mile fiber, high capacity transport providers, about backbone that would cost about \$3 million. BTS is conducting an RF analysis of Mathews. Gloucester is the gateway to come up Route 17. We will be looking at the RUS grant for Mathews, Gloucester and Middlesex Counties.

Telehealth stakeholders met in a work session: Rob Quartel, Donna Givens, Christian Wathen, M.D. and Judy Rowe. Clearly identified broadband service and digital education as issues. All ages need digital literacy. Could young people help to train? There are many grants for tele-med and tele-ed.

Mathews citizens need help. Some people use only their phones, never a computer. They are having to hire help to come into their homes to teach them and their children. Digital literacy is very crucial right now.

Review of By Laws to make virtual meetings easier to run.

Alternative funding for broadband expansion is a topic for discussion by a group of stakeholders at a later date.

The meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted by Judy Rowe.