

MATHEWS BROADBAND ADVISORY BOARD MEETING

5 January 2021 9:00 AM - 10AM on ZOOM



Present: Judy Rowe, Rob Quartel, Jeff Beekhoo, Chuck Huntley, Greg Lewis, Cynthia Hayes, Willie Love, Debbie Falco, Page Herbert, Phil Dunn, Dee Russell, Donna Givens, Mindy Conner, Edith Turner, Sherry Hamilton, David Blanks, and Julie Kaylor

MEETING MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER: The January 5, 2021 meeting of the Mathews Broadband Advisory Board was called to order at 9:01 am by Chairman Judy Rowe.

MINUTES: The December 29, 2020 Meeting Minutes were emailed to members. For review. Judy asked for corrections and additions. There being no corrections or additions, Rob Quartel made a motion to approve the Minutes as presented, and Greg Lewis seconded the motion. The motion carried.

OLD BUSINESS:

- I. Amended Bylaws approval - Judy Rowe reported that Joe Syslo has been called to meeting with RCC and will hopefully join us. The amended Bylaws are up for approval today. She noted two changes: the office of Fiduciary to Financial Coordinator and the corrected spelling of Bylaws. Judy noted a couple minor changes she made (add “and public forums and Multimedia Reporter). Rob Quartel had questions/concerns: **Article 5 Meetings** – the last sentences required a period and the addition of “a voting”. The corrected section now reads, *Directors will make every effort to attend regularly scheduled meetings. If that is not possible, the Chair may designate a substitute from the BAB membership (per Article III) as a voting proxy.* The second correction proposed by Rob pertains to **Article III Number & Qualifications** and reads as follows: *In addition to the membership of the Board of Directors, representative stakeholders in eight categories shall be members: Medical, Education, Tourism, Emergency Services, Business, Economic Development, Young Professionals and County Staff shall be Ex-Officio Board Members, with the same rights and obligations, but not voting power, as the directors, unless nominated and elected as Directors.* Rob moved that we adopt the Bylaws as amended. Cynthia Hayes second the motion. With an affirmative vote from Rob Quartel, Cynthia Hayes, Dee Russell, Chuck Huntley, Greg Lewis, and Judy Rowe, the motion carried.
- II. Election of Officers - The Nomination Committee, with Greg Lewis reported a partial slate of officers to nominate for the Broadband Advisory Board. Judy stated we can take nominations from the floor and volunteers. There were no other nominations and volunteers. Judy explained that county employees are not encouraged to hold an office. Greg moved that we accept the officers as presented with plans to present a nomination(s) for Vice Chair by the next meeting. Rob seconded the motion. The motion carried with an affirmative vote from Rob Quartel, Cynthia Hayes, Greg Lewis, Chuck Huntley, Dee Russell, and Judy Rowe. The officers elected are as follows:
Chair - Judy Rowe
Vice Chair - open

Secretary - Cynthia Hayes (with backup when not available to attend)
Multimedia Reporter - Dee Russell
Financial Coordinator - Joe Syslo

- III. Smart Poles update – Judy referenced a photo in the Gazette-Journal of one of the smart poles that was erected. She turned to Jeff for the update. Jeff reported that all the poles are installed except for Bethel. The team will return tomorrow to complete installation and activate the poles, but Jeff cautioned that even with the poles being activated there are still some things to complete regarding getting the Splash Page up. We are working on the right message, and plan to have everything ready to go, but will not turn the poles on until security features are in place. Dee Russell asked about the speed and Jeff replied 25 MB and will up to 50 MG if needed. Her second question pertained to monitoring the poles and Jeff replied that he and his team will continue to monitor the smart poles, as that is a part of the CARES Act funding that includes a year of service and maintenance.

- IV. Library MiFi Lending update - Greg Lewis expressed there have been a few delays getting started. He only received 8 antennas and the others are back-ordered; however, this requires an adapter, all of which have been backordered with no arrival date. The antennas are a no-go at this point. The content filtering and SIPA compliance are up and running. It took Verizon 8 or 9 days to make the switch to static Ips to dynamic Ip addressing. That was completed yesterday. The other issue was that Verizon activated the devices before shipping, but the agreement was that Greg would activate the hotspots once received. Greg anticipates having the MiFi lending service up and running sometime next week.

Dee Russell had a question about assisting people who have trouble logging on, who will be the contact. Jeff stated his team will be the contact for the smart poles, and Greg confirmed the Library staff will be the contact for the hotspots issues that may arise.

- V. Tower at MVRS update - Jeff Beekhoo had no update on the Tower at Mathews Volunteer Rescue Squad but wanted to share his next plans for moving forward this month. He is putting together a cost analysis for getting fiber in the backbone from the county buildings going to the towers (Rescue Squad). He is getting ready for what is going to happen with CARES funding if it becomes available for broadband and using the existing documentation to create this analysis for USDA round three grants if it comes out so that we are ready to apply for it because there is a very small window to pull documentation together and apply.

Debbie Falco asked how the tower is different from the smart poles. Jeff responded that the smart pole does not require power, has batteries, is solar powered, and you can place at any remote location. The tower is a main telecommunication tower 220 feet tall and has a much farther reach. The tower will be placed at the Rescue Squad building and provide broadband service to half of the county. The equipment is commercial-grade with a five-six mile reach. The smart poles have 600 feet reach around the poles. The plans are for two towers. Verizon and AT&T will be the lease holders on that tower. The second location would have to be funded by CARES money. Rob noted that the smart poles become a part of the infrastructure and can be moved and converted to other uses, and the

tower is a public utility and provides service expansion capabilities. The estimated delivery date is approximately 6 months (mid to late summer).

NEW BUSINESS:

- I. Digital Literacy - Judy noted this has been discussed before, but our first push for information to the county will be the smart poles and MiFi Lending program. In regard to funding, Judy asked Julie Kaylor how the BAB goes about getting the funding from the county for expenses, such as signage. Julie recommended creating a budget for the Broadband Advisory Board within the County's budget, and then BAB will need to figure out when an appropriation is needed from the fund. Julie recommended creating that budget at the beginning of the year when the budget is adopted. Rob noted the county has been very farsighted in supporting broadband and establishing the BAB. Judy suggested and Joe Syslo get together to discuss setting up this process. Mindy stated there are several ways to handle this process, but suggests setting up a different fund and budget for BAB.
- II. Communication/Marketing - This is the next major step after getting the Smart Poles and MiFi Lending program up and running. One of the BAB tasks set forth by the BOS is that BAB present quarterly information sessions to the public, and so far we have only had one. Several others were planned but had to be cancelled. This is still something BAB is obligated to do per the resolution given by the BOS. We could possibly bring in speakers for these sessions. Judy noted there has been a meeting with Jeff to discuss communication and marketing and digital literacy and list of ideas to begin working on. This is the next major step.
- III. Meeting Calendar - Judy presented the calendar that was emailed to BAB members. This includes two meetings per month. One meeting is to precede the BOS meeting each month.
- IV. What's next? The Strategic Plan - Jeff Beekhoo stated typically all funding opportunities become available at the beginning of the year. Federal CARES funding was extended. After establishing a cost analysis, the BAB needs to decide on how to use the possible funding from CARES and USDA grants. Donna stated there is money available in Telehealth and Tele-Education. Jeff agreed the BAB should be looking at these funding sources, especially if there is a shared fiber going past facilities (schools or medical facilities) that qualifies us for funding for equipment for telehealth and tele-education services. Rob asked Donna to join the Telehealth meeting that is scheduled for this Thursday, and if there is anyone else interested in joining the meeting, send him an email. Judy asked Jeff should BAB look at VATI grant opportunities again. Jeff said we should hear from the VATI grants in about two months. Jeff deferred that question until we get more answers.

Judy noted our schools are continuing with virtual instruction with plans to return to partial in-person instruction on January 26, 2021. Judy shared concerns expressed by parents during this time of virtual learning and instruction. She noted our schools are nationally in a crisis and are experiencing issues in Mathews County. We still want technology for kids to be a focus of efforts. Cynthia Hayes shared concerns of educators and administration who are aware of the struggles students and parents are experiencing. Plans are un-

derway to begin hybrid instruction (a combination of in-person and virtual) starting January 26, 2021 with an abbreviated schedule. Parents will be given a choice of hybrid instruction or continuing with virtual instruction for their children. The lack of connectivity continues to be a struggle for some families. The smart buses have been helpful. Judy asks everyone to consider what is happening with our schools, as we are losing kids and families from public schools.

ADJOURN: There being no further business, Rob Quartel moved, and Dee Russell seconded the motion that the meeting be adjourned at 9:47 am.

CALENDAR:

BAB Meeting: 19 JANUARY 2021 9:00 AM ZOOM

BOS Meeting: 26 JANUARY 2021 1:00 PM