



**MATHEWS BROADBAND ADVISORY BOARD MEETING
18 MAY 2021 9AM - 10AM on ZOOM**

MINUTES

Present: Judy Rowe, Rob Quartel, Jeff Beekhoo, David Blank, Michael Lesniak, Amy Dubois, Sherry Hamilton, Donna Givens, Dee Russell, Tyler Beekhoo, Greg Lewis, and Julie Kaylor.

INTRODUCTION: Judy welcomed Michael Lesniak, Mathews County Technology Coordinator, to our meeting.

MINUTES: The minutes have been delayed.

OLD BUSINESS: Updates

VATI Grant with ABB: David Blanks reported the first phase (contractual) is just about complete and have moved into the second phase (engineering). All counties involved have established management groups for the project.

VATI Grant with OBB: Judy noted this with fixed wireless on a tower. Judy has received several phone calls about North Carolina trucks being in the area of the tower. Rob thinks perhaps that is ABB.

Radio System: Judy noted that Sheriff Barrack is charge of this, but Willie Love is our link for updates on how that is moving forward.

MiFis To - Go: Greg Lewis reported the existing 25 units that Library have continued to be used, and he has not had a great demand beyond the 25 units. He has been in discussion with Nancy Welch about using some of the units from the schools that are not in use during the summer months. The Library may borrow a few of the school's units, and he is in talks with Michael Anthony from the schools.

Towers, Smart Poles: Jeff Beekhoo reported there is an issue with the Smart Poles, as AT&T has deactivated the sim cards and he has not received the new sim cards to switch out, as a result there are two Smart Poles that are down. He was able to switch the other poles to T-Mobile. Jeff has been hounded the provider every day. Dee Russell has requested that Jeff send her information on which towers are down so that she can inform the public on Facebook. Jeff noted he sent the Statement of Work for the VATI management to all counties and he is waiting for each county to review it. In regards to the towers in Bohannon and the Rescue Squad, Jeff is still waiting on leasing commitments. Tyler Beekhoo reported they have all the data needed for the cost analysis and he is in the middle of preparing the report with an anticipated finalization by the end of the month. Jeff noted that with the two VATI grant projects and the number of homes that will have broadband access, Mathews will be a fully-served county.

Signs: Dee Russell reported she continues to track the signs and they are on a truck in New Jersey.

NEW BUSINESS:

Contract with Broadband Telecom: Judy Rowe noted during the first six months of contractual services with Jeff Beekhoo he helped us develop a strategic plan, and during the second six months he worked on a cost analysis and helped us write and receive two major VATI grants, MiFi to go, and smart Poles. During last week's Management Team meeting, there were request to extend Jeff's contract. Judy noted this has to check with the county about this possibility. Jeff is willing to extend the contract and noted this would involve identifying requirements for getting those last unserved homes served. Instead of waiting on a commitment from Verizon or AT&T, Jeff suggests constructing our own towers at the Rescue Squad (building one through CARES and one through a VATI application). This can become a county asset in the best case scenario and the worst case scenario is used only for fixed wireless. This would not cost the county any money. Judy requested a vote of support to move forward with the request to extend Jeff's contract. Rob Quartel moved that BBA move ahead aggressively on all the activities outlined by Jeff, and Dee Russell seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Budget - Judy shared the BAB's Big Picture budget that Joe Syslo is working on to give BAB a little more authority, including our eight current projects (two VATI grants, Smart Poles, MiFi-to-Go, Towers, radio system, digital literacy, and telemedicine). Rob noted an article he sent Judy and Jeff about federal subsidy for accounts and suggests we begin looking at affordability of services for residents. Judy noted there are numerous options out there now, and she has asked ABB to look at offering discounts in addition to those only for new subscribers.

Internships and Volunteer Service for Mathews' students – Judy is looking at what the BAB can offer our students in terms of internships and volunteer service which is a graduation requirement. Judy has been in discussions with Randy Applegate and Nancy Welch about students helping to document BAB's progress with broadband in Mathews County. Judy has a meeting scheduled for Friday with Mathews High School's guidance to further discuss internships and volunteer service.

Digital Literacy – There had been a lot of talks about digital literacy before the pandemic. Judy had spoken with Laura Mathews with the Active Lifestyle Center, and she offered her building. David Blank talked about the possibility of using the Bank of America building for digital literacy.

OTHER BUSINESS:

Judy thanked Julie Kaylor for all she does to help with all of the projects, as she has been a valuable asset to BAB. Judy thanked Sherry Hamilton and the Gazette-Journal for the unbelievable amount of coverage BAB is getting.

ADJOURN There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

CALENDAR:

BOS Meeting: **MONDAY**, 24 MAY 2021 6:00 PM at Harry Ward Auditorium in person

BAB Meeting: 1 JUNE 2021 9:00 AM

Presentation: Donna Dittman Hale, Bay Rivers Telemedicine Alliance

BAB Meeting: 15 JUNE 2021 9:00 AM

BOS Meeting: 22 JUNE 2021 6:00 PM at Harry Ward Auditorium in person

THERE ARE 5 TUESDAYS IN JUNE: no meeting 29 June!