

MATHEWS BROADBAND ADVISORY BOARD MEETING

2 February 2021 9:00 AM - 10AM on ZOOM



Present: Judy Rowe, Chuck Huntley, Julie Kaylor, Thomas Jenkins, Amy Dubois, Tyler Beekhoo, Dee Russell, Jeff Beekhoo, Nancy Welch, Willie Love and Donnie Lewis.

MEETING MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER: The February 2, 2021 meeting of the Mathews Broadband Advisory Board was called to order at **9:00 am** by Chairman Judy Rowe.

MINUTES: The January 19, 2021 Meeting Minutes were emailed to members for review. Judy asked for corrections and additions. There being no corrections or additions, Greg Lewis made a motion to approve the Minutes as presented, and Dee Russell seconded the motion. The motion carried.

KUDOS: Judy announced Chuck Huntley is leaving us and going to Essex. Judy extended her thanks for all Chuck has done for Mathews Broadband and best wishes to him.

OLD BUSINESS: Updates

- I. Smart Poles – Judy Rowe used the Smart Pole for today’s meeting and noted how clear the pictures are. Dee Russell and Judy have been going around the county checking and testing the Smart Poles. Due to weather conditions, not all the Smart Poles are up and running, but Judy hopes that we will get enough sunshine within the next few days to get the remaining poles fully charged. Jeff Beekhoo stated that four poles are up and running and three more that need to fully charge. This is a matter of initial activations. Judy congratulated Jeff, Tyler and Dee for their efforts to create the Mathews CARES signature/tagline which is what is seen when you pull up to the Smart Poles and log on to the Internet. Dee came up with the name “Connect Here” logo. Both are used on the Splash page. Judy encourages BAB members to try out one of the Smart Poles. Judy noted the team has been troubleshooting what should go on the Splash page without overloading it. Dee reported that she is currently logged on to a different Smart Pole. Each site will have the Splash page signage, with the intent to keep it simple. She suggested material for the signs be aluminum because the poles are semi-permanent, and we would want quality material for the signs as a good investment for the county. Dee noted the website landing page map that Thomas created was already on the website, and it was decided not to post the map until we are ready to fully rollout the information about the Smart Poles and the Facebook site. Dee noted a few little nuances that we will have to deal with as people connect via the Smart Poles. Judy noted one point that is not on the map is that Route 14 and Route 198 is not on the map and she feels people might need that information.

- II. MiFi's to Go – Greg Lewis reported everything is going great. All 25 MiFi units are available for check, and so far 15 or 16 units have been checked out. The library is fielding calls everyday about the MiFi to Go program. All library staff has been trained and a simple users guide was created to go with the MiFi checkout.
- III. Tower at MVRS and Bohannon Fire Station – Jeff Beekhoo noted that we are still waiting on the contracts with Invisible Towers and Verizon. As soon as the contract is received and solid commitment on paper from Verizon, we can move forward with the towers at the two locations.
- IV. VATI Grants – Tyler Beekhoo reported that initially when the applications were submitted we expected to hear something in January, but when January arrived we learned that DHCD wanted the shape files because RDOF would now factor into determining the grant awards. The shape files were provided and after a couple weeks, DHCD then said they had reconsidered and looked at RDOF areas impacted and it was not fair to count out those areas that were receiving only satellite service. After talking with ABB, Jeff and Tyler's team looked at all the data and looked at what areas were impacted by just satellite and not other types of service, and it was determined that Mathews and Caroline were not affected. They found that Middlesex is in the same situation. The main bulk of changes was in Lancaster. After discussions with ABB this week, he received update financial spreadsheets and shape files to provide to DHCD. As for Mathews County, there were not any changes to the initial application, and we are still in the running for the second round. Tyler noted that DHCD reached out to Julie Kaylor twice last week inquiring if Mathews plans to apply. The plan is to get the application in to DHCD today. Jeff noted his team has ensured that whenever DHCD requested changes and modifications, Tyler worked with ABB to get the requested information to DHCD. Julie Kaylor stated that she reassured DHCD that Mathews Broadband was applying for the VATI grants.
- V. Dee shared the second version of the map she referenced earlier. The map includes Mathews CARES at the bottom, a visual that came from the GPS issue, the logo, thank you participants and county, and each location. Judy noted we are determining how to push this information out to the county, and she spoke with Nancy Welch about getting information out through the schools and organizations. Judy noted Cynthia Hayes has written beautiful thank you letters to the five private property owners for use of land for our Smart Poles.

NEW BUSINESS:

- I. The Strategic Plan (funding) – Jeff noted he will meet with Judy and Willie Love tomorrow at MVRS for the Emergency Services Focus Group. Jeff and Willie will be driving around looking at the fiber backbone and identify the final routes that connect these fibers. When you are looking at grants, you identify the needs (education, health, students, citizen services), the design and technology, identify how to fulfill those needs with the right strategic plan, the costs associated with the needs, and finally the solutions. Once the fiber backbone has been determined and we have a solid decision on the towers, then we will need to determine the fiber backbone connectivity costs combined with our needs, all of this information will be put into a document which can be used for Go Virginia and go to multiple avenues of funding (i.e. CARES). Judy asked Jeff about using

RF analysis, and Jeff responded that it uses clutter data and does a “deep dive into a network and gives you a true number of how many homes will get coverage. Jeff is working on an RF analysis for the tower going up at the MVRS.

II. Focus Groups: Education Medical, Business, and Emergency Services -

Judy noted the first meeting of the education group was January 2020, but she spoke with Nancy Welch yesterday in regard to meeting with Jeff and come up with ideas and a narrative we could use in any grants we apply for. Nancy reiterated the big need is access, access, access for our students. A list of focus group members was formulated January 2020, and now the groups need to meet virtually to brainstorm ideas and create a narrative for grant writing. Nancy noted MCPS was able to secure 400 MiFi units, but there are areas of the county that have no access with the MiFi units even external antennas. There are some families who even with the MiFi units cannot have virtual or remote learning experiences. Nancy stated her interest in the towers especially for helping the schools. Jeff asked Nancy for an address in Chapel Neck so that he can have his team run some tests. Judy will be contacting the focus groups about getting together and even inviting others to join the group.

III. Other Business – There being no further new business Judy once again thanked Chuck Huntley for all his help. Willie noted that Chuck has done an excellent job and will be sorely missed. Judy asked Julie Kaylor if someone from BAB should be at tomorrow’s BOS budget work session. Julie responded that tomorrow is a working meeting for the staff and board, and the opportunity for public input was at last week’s meeting.

ADJOURN: There being no further business, Judy adjourned the meeting.

CALENDAR:

BAB Meeting: 16 FEBRUARY 2021 9:00 AM ZOOM

BOS Meeting: 23 FEBRUARY 2021 6:00 PM ZOOM