

MATHEWS BROADBAND ADVISORY BOARD MEETING

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



Present: Rob Quartel, Judy Rowe, Thomas Jenkins, Jeff Beekhoo, David Blanks, Amy Dubois, Paige Herbert, Greg Lewis, Tyler Beekhoo, Willie Love, Sherry Hamilton, Donna Givens, Amy Dubois, and Mindy Conner

MEETING MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER: The February 16, 2021 meeting of the Mathews Broadband Advisory Board was called to order by Chairman Judy Rowe.

MINUTES: The February 2, 2021 Meeting Minutes were emailed to members for review. Judy stated that she corrected the meeting dates, as she had given incorrect dates. Rob Quartel moved the Minutes be adopted as amended by Judy, and Greg Lewis second the motion. The motion carried.

OLD BUSINESS: Updates

- **Smart Poles** – Judy reported she is currently at the Smart Pole in the Courthouse, and she has been around to the other locations in the county checking on each and everything is going smoothly. Jeff updated the BBAB that the final location has been on hold due to the weather and he hopes to get the drilling and installation done next week. There are a couple locations that require a sim card change. Judy stated that Dee Russell has been working hard to get the signs ready, tweaking the email for mass distribution, and finalizing the Facebook page. The sign will be the size and shape of a handicap sign with simple information, about 4 feet tall.
- **MiFi's to Go** – Greg Lewis everything is going well with the program. As of last week there were 21 checked out, and he has been getting positive feedback. The external antennae seem to be helping a lot.
- **Tower at MVRS and Bohannon Fire Station** – Jeff Beekhoo reported Board members will need to put their heads together because Verizon is giving the tower company a hard time with getting any leases on the towers, and it is not looking promising that Verizon is going to give the lease needed. Jeff is suggesting we look towards seeking the second round of CARES Act funding that is coming out by the end of next month. In the strategic planning, Jeff will include the cost of the towers and equipment for providing broadband to the entire county of Mathews. Jeff suggests we look at using the CARES funding to fast-track getting these towers built ourselves. David asked if the tower company is getting any feedback from Verizon why they are not interested. Jeff said they has not received any responses from Verizon. Rob has a contact high up in Verizon and he volunteered to send him a note. Willie noted Verizon has a dead spot at Hudgins, and this would benefit them. Rob suggested that he, Willie, Jeff, and David get together to help with this.
- **VATI Grants** – Judy reported that the Northern Neck received a \$10,000,000 grant and are moving ahead. They have been working in conjunction with the Northern Neck Plan-

ning Commission. Judy is wondering whether we should be involved with the Middle Peninsula Planning Commission in our efforts. Donna Given advised that the more we collaborate with others the better. Judy received a report that both chambers of the General Assembly funded the FY22 VATI grants at 50 million dollars. Judy shared a list of Bills she receives from Bill Tracker. Jeff Beekhoo reported we are waiting to hear the results from round two of the VATI grant awards, and we are still on track to be a contender. Jeff does not know when that the decision will be made. Tyler shared the round one winners' list with BBAB.

Round One FY2021 VATI grants:

- *Botetourt County and Lumos \$1,364,337 Botetourt County, through a partnership with internet service provider Lumos, will extend its broadband network in the county. The project will bring broadband access to 548 serviceable units, including 30 businesses, through the construction of 59 miles of fiber-optic cable.*
 - *Cumberland Plateau Planning District Commission and Point Broadband \$16,285,217 Cumberland Plateau Planning District Commission will construct 1,312 miles of fiber through a partnership with Point Broadband. The project includes the counties of Buchanan, Dickenson, Russell, and Tazewell and will provide access to 8,335 serviceable units, including 82 businesses.*
 - *LENOWISCO Planning District Commission and Scott County Telephone Cooperative \$1,230,563 LENOWISCO Planning District Commission, in partnership with Scott County Telephone Cooperative, will construct 73 miles of fiber at gigabit speeds in Lee County, and provide access to 679 total serviceable units.*
 - *Mecklenburg County and EMPOWER Broadband \$449,381 Mecklenburg County will construct over 22 miles of fiber in partnership with EMPOWER Broadband. The project will connect 414 serviceable units to broadband at gigabit speeds, including 12 businesses.*
 - *Northern Neck Planning District Commission and All Points Broadband \$10,288,069.82 Northern Neck Planning District Commission, in partnership with All Points Broadband, will construct a regional network that will provide gigabit-capable, fiber-to-the-home broadband to unserved locations in the counties of King George, Northumberland, Richmond, and Westmoreland. The project will provide access to 1,767 total serviceable units, including 31 businesses.*
- **Focus Groups** – The Focus groups are forming with the idea of creating a narrative that will be used to write compelling arguments in upcoming grant applications. The Focus groups, if meeting in a Zoom call, will need a host and a facilitator. Members have been assigned to groups, but you are welcome to join in any group you like. Rob has offered to help setup the Zoom meetings. Rob and Greg both have the professional version of Zoom and can setup meetings for longer than an hour or a host-less meeting. Judy suggested we begin looking at how things are going to change as a result of the pandemic and setting Mathews County up as the most connected county in the state.

NEW BUSINESS –

- **Unsolicited Proposal** – Judy asked David Blanks to share information with the group about the unsolicited proposal. David reported that a study of Mathews County had been conducted and they were proposing a hybrid model of building back on fiber and towers. David is going to request a portion of this information that he could share with the Board.

OTHER BUSINESS –

- **Three Rivers Telehealth** – Donna Givens shared information about a call she had with Three Rivers who has brought in lots of money for telehealth. Donna says there is no one from Mathews collaborating with Three Rivers, and we have lost out on this funding opportunity. Donna would like to see Mathews partner with this group. She noted that Health Resources and Services Administration (at HHS) is the largest grant funding source for telehealth, and Mathews is not considered a rural county, but a part of the Hampton Road metropolitan area. Amy reported that Mathews County has a close-working relationship with Three Rivers Health District. Amy suggested that Donna, Mindy, and she talk about this Three-Rivers Telemedicine Consortium, executive director Donna Ditner Hale. Mindy said she is not familiar with Three Rivers Telemedicine Consortium, but will look into it.

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

CALENDAR:

BAB Meeting: 2 MARCH 2021 9:00 AM ZOOM

BAB Meeting: 16 MARCH 2021 9:00 AM ZOOM

BOS Meeting: 23 MARCH 2021 6:00 PM ZOOM