

## **MATHEWS BROADBAND ADVISORY BOARD MEETING 29 December 2020 9:00 AM - 10AM on ZOOM**

**Present:** Rob Quartel, Judy Rowe, Cynthia Hayes, Greg Lewis, Dee Russell, Joe Syslo, Willie Love, Chuck Huntley, Sherry Hamilton, Donna Givens, Debbie Falco, Nancy Welch, Amy Dubois, Mindy Conner, Julie Kaylor, Jeff Beekhoo, Page Herbert, Donnie Lewis and Phil Dunn.

### **MEETING MINUTES**

**CALL TO ORDER:** The December 29, 2020 meeting of the Mathews Broadband Advisory Board was called to order at 9:00 am by Chairman Judy Rowe.

**MINUTES:** The December 8, 2020 Meeting Minutes were emailed to members. 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. **Smart Poles Status:** Judy shared a PowerPoint presentation that highlighted the steps in this process. Step 1 was marking the locations for the Smart Poles. Step 2 was digging the holes, Step 3 was pouring the cement pads, and Step 4 was installation of seven Smart Poles on Monday, December 28, 2020 by Colonial Electrical Services. The first Smart Pole was installed at Route 14 (North, Virginia) Park and Ride. The other six poles were installed at the following locations: Route 198 Park and Ride, the Ruritan Club, West Mathews Community Center, Saint Matthew Church, Antioch Baptist Church, and the parking lot behind the county buildings. The contractor will return to complete installation and activate the Smart Poles.
  
- II. **Mathews Memorial Library MiFi Lending Program:** Greg Lewis reported the 25 MiFi were received yesterday and will be ready for check-out by Library patrons by the end of this week, and still working on the lending policy. Plans are underway to begin serious publicity regarding the availability of the MiFi lending program starting next week. Greg shared that he ran into a couple issues regarding the agreement with Verizon Wireless for the 25 hotspots, management software, and one-year of service. Verizon could not provide a 12-month quote, so he had to go with a month-to-month agreement. The cost for management software included in the quote could not be fulfilled by Verizon as is done recommended by the schools, and now we have to comply with CIPA (Child Internet Protection Act) which will require an additional cost of \$200 to \$300 per year. Plans were to purchase 25 external antennas, but he only purchased 22 because they were a little more expensive than what was quoted. The sources of funding is twelve months, and we will own the equipment after that time, but we will not have the funding to continue service after that point.

Judy expressed that the Smart Poles and MiFi lending program are the two projects for CARES Act funds. Her concern now is preparing literature and getting information out to the public about both the Smart Poles and MiFi lending. Chuck Huntley, Jeff Beekhoo, and Greg Lewis will coordinate to prepare a Splash Page for accessing these services.

- III. **Bylaws:** Judy expressed appreciation for the magnificent job Joe Syslo did in updating the BAB Bylaws. Joe reported the committee went through the draft and sent it out to voting Board members. After review and incorporation of comments, the draft was sent out to the entire board (about 60 people). Everyone in the organization should review the draft and have the opportunity to approve or disapprove the draft Bylaws. Joe noted that he added the *Fiduciary* position as a means of monitoring revenues and disbursements and does not signify treasurer requirements. Rob Quartel asked if the group spoke with the County attorney regarding legal responsibility relative to the *Fiduciary* position. Julie Kaylor explained that the advisory board has not authority, and she suggested appointing someone to make recommendations to the Board of Supervisors for payments and request appropriations, but the legal responsibility falls on the county. Amy DuBois suggested the title of *Financial Coordinator*, and the group agreed. Judy noted we will vote on the updates to the Bylaws at the January 5, 2021 meeting.
  
- IV. **Broadband Telecom Services Contract Extension:** Judy reported the Board of Supervisors approved the BAB's recommendation to extend the contract with Broadband Telecom Services and Jeff Beekhoo for six months (January – June 2021). Jeff reported he will finalize the BAB Strategic Plan after all comments are received. The plan will then be finalized.
  
- V. **Other Old Business:** Jeff Beekhoo wanted to ensure everyone is aware that CARES funding has been extended and there will be new CARES funding specifically for broadband in the coming year and will be useful for fast-tracking the BAB mission for Mathews. Rob enquired about the status of the tower, and Jeff replied that the tower has been

approved by the Rescue Squad Building and it is a go. Permission has been given from Verizon committing to leasing on the tower. Rob suggested Judy adds this to the list of accomplishments.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

- I. **Moving Forward with the Strategic Plan:** Judy reported we are moving forward with the Strategic Plan and the coming year. We will be looking for federal grants and what is needed to the overall plan for serving Mathews County. We are awaiting the results of the two VATI grants and should hear something in January.

**Digital Literacy Concerns:** Judy is interested in finding ways to provide information for those citizens who are not able to access online services. She referenced a newspaper article about the declining student numbers in middle and elementary schools. Judy feels it is BAB's job to educate the public in helping them deal with the services available. Judy reminded the group that digital literacy was a big part of our VATI grant applications. She referenced a meeting she coordinated in February with Nancy Welch, Edith Turner, Cynthia Hayes, and Bill Vrooman regarding helping parents, educators, and students get up to speed with digital literacy, and then the pandemic hit, and those plans were halted. Judy has been successful in recruiting Frannie Hubbard, an English teacher at MHS and former Daily Press reporter, who has agreed to help promote digital literacy via print media. She has also spoken with Charlie Koenig and Sherry Hamilton from the Gazette-Journal in soliciting their continued help in promoting digital literacy efforts. Carol Steele has also expressed interest in being a part of this effort. Suggestions from the group included: working with the health department and helping people get back to in-person learning (Debbie Falco), having print material available at vaccination sites (Rob Quartel), coordinating with the Department of Social Services (Dee Russell), and Meals on Wheels and students taking information home (Nancy Welch). Willie Love cautioned that with the abundance of coordination efforts and required paperwork the health department is experiencing with coordinating vaccination, that may not be a good idea to request their assistance at this point. Rob Quartel suggested the formation of a Communication Committee to follow-up on these ideas. Judy asked Dee Russell to head the Communication Committee, and she accepted. Judy suggested that Chuck, Jeff, and Dee discuss how to link people to important information. Dee Russell suggested putting out print information on how to access Smart Poles. Judy asked Page Herbert about his contacts for putting together print information (a mailing) with basic information. Page and Thomas Jenkins will coordinate. Rob suggested we ensure any information we put out include the message that the Smart Pole service is FREE, and Judy suggested we give credit to the CARES Act funding.

- II. **Nomination Committee:** Judy has reached out to the people who will serve as the Nomination Committee but has not heard from all of them. The Financial Coordinator office will need to be added. Greg agreed to work with the Nomination Committee and will be presenting a list of nominees for voting at the January 8, 2021 meeting.
- III. **Other New Business:** Rob Quartel congratulated the chair Judy Rowe, the Broadband Advisory Board, and the consultants for a very productive year.

**ADJOURN:**

With no further business, Rob Quartel made a motion to adjourn the meeting. The meeting was adjourned at 10:03 AM.

**CALENDAR:**

BAB Meeting: 05 JANUARY 2021 9:00 AM Zoom