



**MATHEWS BROADBAND ADVISORY BOARD  
MEETING  
8 February 2022 9:00-10:00AM  
virtually on Zoom  
MINUTES**

**Present On Zoom:** Jeff Beekhoo, Deb Falco, Julie Kaylor, Greg Lewis, Rob Quartel, Judy Rowe (Chair), Dee Russell, Joe Syslo, Willie Love, Stephanie Abeel, Melissa Mason, Sherry Hamilton

The Chair called the regular BAB meeting to order.

**BACKGROUND:** Chairperson Judy Rowe called the meeting to order at the smart pole located next to the Ruritan Club.

**MINUTES:** The minutes from the 1/18/22 meeting were approved as emailed. Rob Quartel moved, Seconded by Greg Lewis.

**OLD BUSINESS:**

**Towers:** Jeff reported that drillers were due to take core samples for the two tower sites this Thursday. Things should progress quickly after this step has been completed. Willie asked Jeff if needed MVRs drawings. They will be on site if needed.

Jeff and Judy walked the sites with the architectural engineers to determine tower locations and mark the access roads with all the stakeholders.

Plans are for deploying the two towers by Sept 22. The towers will have lease space for cellular and fixed wireless. The county of Mathews cannot be a service provider. There will be an RFP for a provider who will maintain the system.

**VATI Grant with OBB:** (Judy) – Next meeting is tomorrow so no update currently. The Public Use Wi-Fi committee provided a map that begins at Hyco Corner and runs down Main St. just over 1 mile to the Mariner's Museum. Once the towers are online we could look at relocating the smart poles for additional public use and additional revenue. OBB wants mapping of the

county. Jeff is in process of providing the map. Joe requests that we extend the contract for the smart poles for the entire 2022 fiscal year. Julie comments that we have already extended the contract to June of 2022. Judy clarifies that both the smart poles and Mi-Fi contracts run through June of 2022. Joe proposes that we extend both for the county's fiscal year. (Julie) There is some flex in how you spend your budget. In general, we can reallocate line-item funds as long as we don't go over our bottom line. No motion was made at this time.

**Breezeline - (Willie)** Breezeline has the conduit in place but has yet to pull the fiber. They remain ahead of schedule on the backhaul for this project. They have released the addresses of the homes they intend to pass. The final walkout number has increased from 402 to 462 homes. The increased cost of \$1200 per each of these additional homes is being covered by Breezeline so this is a win-win for the county.

**Smart Poles:** Joe suggested that we ask for service costs for the entire fiscal year. At this time, they are approved through June 30, 2022. Decisions based on usage will be made prior to that time. Who will maintain them? Where can we use them in the future? Willie proposed some possibilities on usage at a marina or at a campground with the county providing service and collecting revenue. A plan will be developed for all of this.

**Mi-Fis To Go/Digital Literacy:** (Greg) – May be able to cut back on the number of MiFi's since they are not all checked out all the time. Money that library received from the American Rescue Plan came in two parts Emergency Connectivity Fund may run out in June. Digital Literacy funding from the Library of Virginia allowed the library to purchase 12 laptops, software, and some other hardware. These will be to provide training outside of the library. ARPA money is allowing the library to modernize their training.

**Community Based Training:** (Greg) We are seeking locations for training sessions. Jeff noted that Verizon upgraded their equipment in this area which eats up MiFi data more quickly. This will make fixed wireless more attractive to customers rather than 4g hotspots.

**Radio System:** (Willie) – Equipment has been delivered. Should be up and running by mid-May at the latest.

**Broadband authority - (Joe)** We still need to get meeting set up to get public response. After that, it will take a month or two for incorporation. Judy has requested a work session with the BOS and the county administrator is setting this up. Jeff, Willie, and Judy intended to meet last night but the meeting was cancelled. Joe projects the entire process will take until beginning of summer. All the paperwork has been done. Willie noted that Joe's timeline is very realistic. Having a work session with the board is the only thing that can expedite. Melissa noted that some on the BOS may be reluctant to approve an authority. In response, Julie stated that even if the BAB becomes an authority, it cannot encumber the county without BOS approval. Judy remarked that Mathews County has not paid a dime thus far and we are working very hard to keep the county's contribution to a minimum.

### **NEW BUSINESS:**

**Towers and Backhaul** (Jeff) core sample drilling will take samples and will establish height limitations and give actual costs over next two weeks.

**Middle mile connection** working on a NTIA grant. Having projects shovel ready that we can go after is a big plus. We are working with a provider to see about a middle mile backbone connection to the Hampton Roads regional transatlantic fiber regional datacenter ring. Segarra (the provider) will bring fiber to Gloucester and Mathews. This could be a huge joint initiative affecting schools as well. Lots of new funding is coming out.

**Public Information Sessions -** (Rob and Joe) We have discussed it but no progress thus far. Rob will talk to Emily at the Visitors Center. Joe comments that we need our own web site. Big chunk of the county doesn't have internet, so Rob suggests a bulletin board and civic club presentations. Judy has done quite a few. Covid has shut down many of our efforts in this area. Judy will talk with Emily as well.

**Budget -** We will appear at BOS public meeting this Thursday. Presentations are limited to 5 minutes. Rob suggests every broadband committee board member attend the meeting in the courthouse at 6 PM.

**Website -** status of the website. Judi Green is taking over management of the site. Gloucester has done a nice portal for all things broadband. Joe notes that the idea is to create our own website so that we can input news and info

without going through a lot of steps. Julie cautions that this needs to wait until the BAB becomes an authority. Dee talked with Judy about security and that the county site can restrict us to maintain security.

Scott and Stephanie Abeel just moved to the county and have had trouble getting service. Cindy Leach is another who is moving here from Alexandria and is looking for broadband connection. We are working with those who need service as we become aware of their need.

### **MOTION TO ADJOURN**

There being no further business Joe moved to adjourn. Willie seconded the motion. There being no dissent the meeting was adjourned.

**Next Meeting: Mar 8, 2022, at 9:00 AM. Hybrid meeting**

*Respectfully Submitted by: Phil Dunn, Secretary*