

## BROADBAND ADVISORY BOARD MEETING

8 March 2022 9:00 AM - 10:00 AM

In-person at Library or on ZOOM

MINUTES: 2/8/2022 by email

TY, PAGE, NANCY, WILLIE, JOE, DONNIE, GREG, JUDY, JEFF, DEBBIE, PHIL

### OLD BUSINESS:

#### Updates:

Budget Meeting: Joe, Judy –The contract for our smart poles was extended for 1 year as was full funding for MiFi. \$177,710 in Federal and state grant money was requested. Rep. Wittman and Sen. Warner are both interested in securing additional funding.

Website: Since the addresses of those slated to receive fixed cable hookups have been published, Broadband has become a news flash on the county website. This means getting our site up is more critical than ever since so many people are interested.

Report to BOS (2/22/22): Judy reported that she was second to last in presenting to the BOS. They were burned out, so no questions were asked. Chairman Rowe showed the committee the PowerPoint that she showed to BOS on the progress that has been made adding Infrastructure for universal broadband coverage in the county. Ms. Rowe noted that her presentation was warmly received.

Cell Towers: Jeff received the geological analysis, and the foundation is being designed. Cost for towers will be forthcoming. He requested 2 quotes. One for a “mono” pole tower and one for a cage type tower. Mono pole or self-supporting towers use a wider foundation. The two types of towers are the same height. But the cables run inside the mono pole tower and outside on a cage type tower. There is no difference in capability or service, but mono poles are cheaper. The choice of which type of tower we choose depends on the results of the geological analysis.

VATI Grant with Breezeline: Willie – Crews have been working for the last week and are making good progress coming up 14 with backbone fiber. This construction is mixing aerial with underground installation. Generally, the fiber is above ground until it reaches the HS then goes underground.

VATI Grant with OBB: Joe, Nancy – Meet with them tomorrow. No update.

Public Wi-Fi: Joe – Been meeting with Colin. To complete the project, we will need 4 possibly 5 transponders located on buildings downtown. Some building owners have been reticent to locate transponders on their buildings, but despite this, we expect to have this completed by the end of this month. The signal will come off the Firehouse or from the tower across from Fort Nonsense.

MiFi's To Go/Digital Literacy: Greg - Everything is going well. Usage has ticked up again. 94% of the units are in use.

The digital literacy training program is adding new materials to get folks up and running. The focus is on in person training. The goal is to help give folks basic digital competencies. We are advertising through the Gazette Journal, library website, and social media platforms. Thus far interest is very high.

Radio System: Willie – No update. Equipment is here just waiting on installation

Smart Poles: Judy wants to create a plan that details what can be done with the redeployment of the Smart Poles in the future. Jeff noted that the cost to move a pole is about \$2500. Jeff made a house call last Saturday to get the Piankatank smart pole back on-line.

As a side note Judy mentioned that Thomas Jenkins has resigned his county position. Much of this committee's success has been due to Mr. Jenkins making sure that we had all our permits in place while other counties didn't. Mathews has leapfrogged several positions in the construction process because of Mr. Jenkins' hard work.

#### NEW BUSINESS:

General Assembly: Joe & Judy – There are several pieces of proposed legislation relating to expanding broadband in VA. The March 4 edition of VA News online lays out a plan for affordable broadband (HB 1265). The governor wants a Master Plan submitted to him by Dec 1 that details how to address underserved areas of the state. We are ahead of the curve. There are also bills under consideration that would require including broadband access in all new construction, making it possible to grant easements for BB installation, and to authorize BB authorities to establish BB worker training program.

Judy attended a meeting where Senator Mark Warner: gave advice on getting the most “bang for your buck” on the use of federal money for rural broadband in Virginia counties. He cautioned attendees not to use Fed funds but rather local money for matching. We did exactly what he said. Mathews county has not spent one penny on BB thus far.

Back Haul, NTIA Grant, Segra: Jeff is working on the SEGRA grant. He believes that there will be a lot more money becoming available for broadband. SEGRA will sponsor 3 webinars. SEGRA is going to take the lead and is going to fund the 30% match necessary to bring the backhaul in. Schools and businesses will benefit from this. County buildings can be upgraded. Even county phone service costs can be reduced significantly. He noted that the cost for SEGRA started at \$30,000,000 then the price came down to \$9,000,000 then during his last conversation with them SEGRA is now able to cover the match. We need a MOU. Sen. Warner can help Mathews with an infrastructure bill to help bring in the backhaul. The grant SEGRA guidelines will come out after the three seminars have been presented. This grant only requires letters of support: County, Schools, Sen Warner, Local Businesses.

Public Information: Radio presentation - Rob; Joe NO REPORT

OBB brought posters, signs. We will have a presence at Mayfair, Market Days, and the library. Joe has arranged for a booth at Mayfair showcasing our activities. Donnie will put banners in every fire station. Joe suggests that we should have a ribbon cutting when public Wi-Fi comes on-line. Brochures will also be available if companies provide them.

There will be a meeting with Breezeline on additional customer addresses and Open Broadband tomorrow. We continue to request an informational meeting with the BOS. They have yet to decide if they will meet with us.

New contacts: Judy – People have been contacting Judy since the addresses were published online. She has received a lot of hugs lately!!!

Miriam Cromwell, Richard & Pam Thacker, Charlie & Phebe Hyde, Jim McKinnon

ADJOURN Donnie made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Phil Dunn. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,  
Phil Dunn, Secretary

Calendar:

BOS Meeting: Tuesday, 22 March 6:00 PM Historic Courthouse

BAB Meeting: Tuesday, 12 April 2022, 9:00 AM hybrid in-person