

Mathews Broadband Advisory Committee
Meeting Minutes
May 10, 2022

Attendees: Chuck Goddard, Donnie, Tyler, Judy, Melissa, Page, Phil, Greg, Sherry
Meeting called to order at 9:02

The Minutes from the April 12, 2022, meeting was approved by voice vote.

General Updates

Our new County administrator met with us at last meeting Judy also met with her privately. The Mathews Board of Supervisors has identified high speed broadband for the entire county as a top priority. We will see how that plays out as the county budgeting process proceeds.

Judy noted that the administrator seems both interested and supportive of our efforts.

Our public information initiative at Mayfaire was a huge success. There was lots of traffic at our booth. Free public Wi-Fi through OBB is now available in and around the courthouse.

Installer training – RCC is amenable and OBB has an instructor on board. The training program should get going soon. Spoke with Rep Keith Hodges he is not of the opinion that we can force new construction to provide interact infrastructure at this time.

Tyler Beekhoo provided a construction schedule for the towers with construction starting in mid-June and completion by the end of September.

VTI Grant with Breezeline - is moving forward. Judy is meeting weekly meetings with Breezeline staff.

Breezeline should begin testing the infrastructure they have installed to date next week. They are addressing their capacity issues. We have been informed they are waiting for a piece of equipment before they can “light things up.”

Private roads and driveways can be an issue. If one neighbor objects that can hold things up.

Breezeline is trying to include at least one English speaking member in each construction crew so that citizens who have questions can be addressed.

VATI Grant with OBB – The equipment is here They are waiting for something that needs to be installed on the tower on RTE 14. We are very close to being able to add service to 700+ customers.

The FCC opened a 3rd round of funding for the Emergency Connectivity Fund. However, there is little chance that we will receive any money this year. There is 1 billion dollars left in the federal funding this year. There was 6 billion last year. Chances for funding are unclear. Mathews Library has requested 24k to keep the MiFi program going for another year (7/22-6/23). Should know in the next few weeks. If that funding does not materialize, then we will look for other sources to keep this program going.

Moving along with dig lit partnership with the Active Lifestyle Center and Pam (?) starting in the fall.

We are trying to get an installation schedule from Breezeline. Everything remains in a very fluid state.

Radio System – Donnie They are waiting for 3 components for the system. Rolled hard start to June or July with a September date for going live. We are one lightning strike from having no radio system.

Melissa Mason advised that we should move forward with our request to become an authority rather than an advisory board. This is a good time to go forward with the BOS. We should emphasize ways in which bundling internet services can save money through the E rates category. Virtually all county and public entities (county offices, schools, fire and police.) may fall into this category.

We have been in talks with SEGRA for over a year about pursuing this middle mile grant. (Backhaul for entire county.) Currently, access to high-speed broadband is a front burner issue nationally. Broadband companies are growing and re-structuring to try to meet the demand and leadership changes frequently. Due to restructuring of the company SEGRA will not be joining with Mathews and Gloucester in this initiative. Jeff is at a conference seeking new partners for this project.

New Business

Public Information is critical to BAB's success. Judy will speak at the Ruritan Club on the 19th. The public needs to be kept up to date on the status of our efforts. We have 8 projects going.

Senior Health - Triad Fair June 21st, Joe, Jeff and Judy digital health and tele-health throughout the area. Christine Helsell will present on tele-health. Stacey Guinn from RCC will be there and Jeff will bring his mobile Command Center to instruct attendees on broadband.

Decisionmakers need to be aware that home healthcare equipment will not work w/o broadband.

June 25 – We will tweak what we did at Mayfaire. Breezeline shipped several fiber optic goodies as give aways.

Towers are a top priority. Once construction starts it will go quickly. Hard lines require more construction than wireless. The whole idea is to get high speed broadband for every home in the county.

That's why the BAB is working with multiple companies to create a hybrid system that services everyone in one way or another.

Next BOS meeting May 24

Next BAB meeting June 14, at Mathews Library or online.

Motion to adjourn was approved by voice vote at 9:48 AM.