

Mathews Broadband Advisory Board Monthly Meeting
Minutes
June 22, 2022

The meeting was called to order at 9:02. Chair Judy Rowe welcomed to Noah Devilla, who is working with us on VATi open broadband grant to the meeting. Noting that he will report later in reference to the grant.

Breaking news

Towers -

Jeff has a call tomorrow to go over procurement process with Ramona Wilson, County Administrator. We now have final quotes on construction costs. Supply chain problems caused us to have to refresh our estimates. After Ramona gives the go ahead, we can break ground quickly

Noah –

Open Broadband - groundbreaking news. Mathews VATI mtg yesterday good news got most of our items and we able to schedule installers should be going by the end of the month if not the first week of July. + 65 people are signed up on the waiting list. The climbers have been scheduled. Things are looking good. North End Tower. 180 homes from Mathews and 130 from ????? will be covered by this tower. This is a Line of Sight technology. Plans start at \$50 per month Speeds are rated at 100 mbps. We should get those 180 addresses up on our website so those people can see if they are covered. These are in addition to Breezeline. Both towers should be completed simultaneously.

We are partnering with Gloucester on this VATI Grant. Judy got a tour of the equipment that will be installed. Some will be fed wirelessly, and some will be fiber based. Wireless tech has improved dramatically. Can cut through trees and brush.

VATI Grant with Breezeline. Judy & Tyler –

Mathews County has had weather delays due to flooded roads. The 18-month countdown deadline for finishing install is Jan 30, 2023. Breezeline is waiting for Dominion permits Tick Neck Rd has been an area of contention 28 homes have grown to 56 homes. There were some points of contention but those are being cleaned up. No marketing yet. That should begin in July to get people to begin to sign up. Marketing will be on a “rolling basis” as areas are completed. Need a survey of student demand for service.

We need to get addresses that will be served by Open Broadband up on the website. Calls are coming in at a furious rate. Breezeline is having trouble with their Call Center. People looking to

purchase homes are calling to find out if high speed internet is available at prospective addresses. Breezeline has an issue with people calling in to see if they can secure service. Real Estate Association should have a contact that we can direct people to for info on internet service.

Installer training - RCC program using State funding of 1 million to provide 6 days of training for installers. \$259 per person to take the course. 6-10 people per course. Leads to certification as an installer. Placement guarantees lead to securing funding.

Smart Poles - We have signs to let people know what it is and to report service outage.

MiFi to Go Greg – 90- 95% of the units are checked out at any given time. Current round of funding ends June 30. We have three sources of funding for next year. Have requested 24k for next year from the Emergency Connectivity Fund. Chances are we will not get that funding. We are in the 70-75% discount rate for funding. Looks like 80% is necessary for funding. Funding also available through infrastructure. Our last resort is to ask for funding from the county.

First two rounds of funding were fully funded but the third round is questionable. We may get partial funding through a grant and then request help from the county.

There are Federal subsidies for Open Broadband.

Radio System – Donnie

We finally have an update from the Sherriff's Office. As everyone already knows, we've had supply chain issues. We have the mobile equipment for the units, but we are still lacking materials for the microwave backhaul. Currently we are looking at August-Sept for completion.

Judy will speak with Emily about updating the website to get the OBB addresses up.

Hal is our point man on Star link. So far, no connections in Mathews County. Could be a huge game changer or just a flash in the pan.

Groundbreaking Celebrations -

Sometime in September. Breezeline will provide materials for ground-breaking ceremony we should have 300 homes hooked up by Sept. We will invite the governor and congressmen to attend. Could connect with Market Days to increase attendance. The more people we have at an event the more likely it is to get a big politico to attend.

Judy has invited Jeff Lloyd from OBB to attend the July BOS meeting.

A Towering Event. Ribbon cutting celebrations for each tower. Towers will be completed simultaneously.

Telehealth –

Triad Senior Health Fair next Tues We have invited Christy Kelso from Riverside Health and two other speakers will present. New equipment for ambulances will be announced.

Stacey Wrenn? from RCC will also present on their health programs
Jeff will bring the mobile unit

Gwinn's Island Festival Willy will be there Noah will try to attend. 3000 people should be in attendance. This makes for a good opportunity to get info out to the people in Mathews

Funding – Jeff

Bipartisan infrastructure bill morphed into MTIA 3 prong initiative: 1) broadband equity access 2) dig equity program and 3) middle mile grant to build out underserved areas. Applications are due 9/30

BEAD and Digital Equity are interesting, but states must apply. Digital equity is different states must come up with a plan to make funding available for local entities.

Middle mile grant is something we are actively pursuing. Lots of money out there but the issue is figuring out how to apply for it.

Greg –

Digital Literacy has been a huge part of our efforts. ARPA Grants to add 20 new laptops new tutorials Niche Academy (how to use the library), Applied for \$4,000 grant from AT&T to provide classes online or in person.

New Contacts: Judy – people from the lower end of the county are calling about service. Breezeline is not going down there currently. The folks in the Southernmost part of the county may have access to towers other than ours.

Talking about creating a map or maps that show(s) how and where service is going. We need at least two maps “before and after” to demonstrate where people stand in terms of getting service.

Shery Hamilton (Newspaper) will be running 3 stories in the next two weeks.

Meeting adjourned at 9:04 am

Respectfully submitted
Phil Dunn, Secretary