



MATHEWS BROADBAND ADVISORY BOARD MEETING
12 July 2022 9:00 AM - 10:00 AM
In-person at Library or on ZOOM
Minutes

Members Attending: Judy Rowe, Rob Quartel, Bonnie Betz, Jeff Beekhoo, Debbie Falco, Nancy Welch, Page Herbert, Greg Lewis, Donnie Lewis, Ramona Wilson, Judi Green, Melissa Mason, Willie Love, Marshall Ruffin, Joe Syslo, Sidney Ricks, and Phil Dunn

UNVEILING TYLER’S MASTERPIECE! Tyler created an incredible color-coded map of service in the county. Judy will send it out and it will be on the website. Congrats to Tyler.

MINUTES: 5/10/22 & 6/14/22 minutes emailed approved as written. Phil to forward minutes to Judi Green.

OLD BUSINESS:

VATI Grant with Breezeline: Willie Love – having issues getting pedestals. Waiting on joint use permits from Dominion. Finishing Cricket Hill putting fiber to Gwynn’s Island to increase capacity there. Finding quite a few interesting problems. Should have detailed update by net meeting. We are turning complaints over to breezeline. Some customers paying for high-speed service but not getting that service. They have been “cherry picking” customers in the past. It will be interesting to see what conversion rate customers are getting as they upgrade the capacity. Some service on the island has been reported spotty for the last month.

VATI Grant with OBB: Judy Rowe, Joe Syslo – They have moved the enclosures to the North End Tower. All of the equipment is there. We need electricity. Climbers are scheduled and we need to market. We have money for training RCC workforce development. OBB is going to provide a trainer (Nick Steward). What we need now is a recruiting program for students. We need to get approval to spend some money for advertisements for hiring. Money for advertising will come from the BAB budget. Need approval for expenditures over \$500.

Towers: Jeff Beekhoo - Still working with Ramona putting an RFP together. Procurement is requiring a 30day period for review. Tried to go through Virginia Beach but procurement is not allowing it. We are dotting the I’s and crossing the T’s. Once we have responses back from the RFP, we will choose a contractor and begin construction. RFP should go out in mid-August so, hopefully, we will start in September. Ramona added that she is still waiting for stamped engineering drawings. Jeff is also waiting and will forward as soon as he receives them.

MiFis To Go/Digital Literacy: Greg Lewis - Nothing new to report. Library is at 100%+ usage with the WiFi's to go. We have already started digital literacy program online. Numerous tutorials are on the library's website. In person training is scheduled to start in September. Greg's work puts us in a great position because our grant includes much more than infrastructure. Judy anticipates an audit sometime in the future and digital literacy is part of our grant requirement.

Radio System: Willie Love - "Everything remains at a standstill. We are waiting for the microwave backhaul to King and Queen County. Mobile and handheld equip is here but we need state police and sheriff's office wired and three microwave dishes must be wired. It's not progressing at this point. I think we'll be ok because funding is in place."

Website: Judi Green – Open Broadband addresses scheduled for service are online. Judy Rowe is reaching out to the real estate community. The website is a huge resource for informing the public. Judi Green would like someone to review the site for accuracy. Phil should send Judi Green the minutes once they've been approved.

PUBLIC INFORMATION:

Triad Health and Safety Fair: Judy - Christy Helsel, MSN, RN, Director/Digital Health, Riverside Health System. We (the BAB) are doing public information sessions wherever we can. Tele-health opportunities are available through the Riverside Health system. Session was very informative about available tele-health opportunities and reassuring for attendees. Breaking NEWS Rembrantt – program that equates strokes to heart attacks i.e. "brain attacks". Tele-stroke technology if a patient is suspected of having a stroke they are put in touch with a tele-neurologist within minutes. Mathews has taken this one step further. One issue is that this system is not available 24 hours a day. We can't get AT&T service but Verizon offers a similar system. We are meeting with them on August 9th so we can get 24/7 service. We are looking to get this under one accounting umbrella.

Gwynn's Island Festival: Judy, Willie, Jeff – We had a great deal of traffic all day long. The new map really was a hit. Amazingly enough there was no broadband access at the festival!

Breezeline has run out of pedestals. So we have interduct sprouting up in people's yards (photo). Pulling fiber is much easier than installing the interduct.

We have been looking at various tracts of County property for new smart pole locations. Smart poles are not active at the moment because the sim cards need to be reactivated.

NEW BUSINESS:

GROUNDBREAKING CELEBRATIONS:

Breezeline: wants us to suggest names on who to invite. Judy asked Deb Falco to help identifying who to invite. Congressman Rob Wittman, Chandler Vaughan, Delegate Keith Hodges have all been involved thus far. It would be nice to have the BOS attend. Breezeline must be finished by Jan 31, 2023

Towers: BOS, Senator Mark Warner since this is funded by federal money Warner showed interest in how we were spending federal money would be a good person to invite.

PUBLIC INFORMATION: radio, advertising, Market Days It would be a good idea for OBB and Breezeline to have their own booths at Market Days. Kudos to the Gazette Journal. They have covered this story from A-Z.

FINANCIAL REPORT: Joe Syslo - We have budget money for incidentals only. Next year we will be looking for funds so we need to have budget lines for operations costs. Right now, we are in a good position. Judy wants to start a dialogue about spending.

FUTURE BROADBAND FUNDING: Jeff, Tyler - Jeff has been working with a couple companies the NTIA middle mile backhaul grant. By next week he will have a commitment from these companies for installations of mid-orbit "earth stations" that provide gigabit speed to fiber networks. This is middle-mile back haul to fiber if grant goes through, they will be putting up 6 major dishes that will transmit to mid-orbit satellites at Virginia Beach. Mathews has no financial commitment. Everything will come from \$20 million in federal funding.

STARLINK: Hal Bourque will be installing this Thursday. Some in Mathews are getting service now.

AFFORDABILITY: Breezeline - Judy One of our major pieces is affordability. We've talked to everyone who would listen to us. Lifeline still exists, but now the FCC has created a program for affordable broadband. You can go online to the FCC website and then to the Affordable Connectivity Program. In Mathews County, we can use the schools to communicate with the county. We will provide info on the program and computers will be stationed in each school so people can apply for the program. Breezeline has created a program of its own for those who need assistance in affording high speed internet. All students in Mathews County qualify for this program. Parents can get a \$30 per month rebate on service. Rep from breezeline will attend future meeting to answer our questions. Lots of Mathews citizens also qualify for this program.

ADJOURN – Meeting adjourned at 10:10 am

Calendar: BOS Meeting: Tuesday, 26 July 2022 6:00 PM MHS Auditorium

BAB Meeting: Tuesday, 9 August 2022, 9:00 AM hybrid in-person at Mathews Memorial Library & on Zoom

BOS Meeting: Tuesday, 23 August 2022 6:00 PM MHS Auditorium