



MATHEWS BROADBAND ADVISORY BOARD MEETING

12 May 2026

MINUTES

*Judy Rowe; *Willie Love; *Greg Lewis; *Page Herbert; *Marshall Ruffin, M.D.; David Walsh; Ramona Wilson; Tyler Beekhoo; Jeff Beekhoo; Joe Syslo; Deb Falco; Steve Falco; Adam Beck; Joni Close; Sherry Hamilton

*Voting Member; Quorum = 5 voting members

The Chair called the meeting to order at 9:00 AM.

5/12//2026 Minutes Approved as emailed. Willie moved; Greg seconded.

Quick recap

The Mathews County Broadband Advisory Board met to discuss updates on wireless internet infrastructure and connectivity options for residents. Jeff provided an update on T-Mobile's progress with two monopole towers, reporting that an updated license agreement for the Hudgins Tower was received and would be reviewed before sending to Ramona for processing. The board discussed the success of Verizon Wireless Home Internet service, with Page sharing his positive experience and significant cost savings compared to previous options. The group explored various connectivity solutions including T-Mobile's partnership with Starlink for business services and the potential for external antennas to improve 5G coverage. They also discussed upcoming Verizon Wireless tower projects at Cop Street (Cobbs Creek) and Beelec, (Beaverlett) as well as the potential deployment of fiber internet service in June (from RiverStreet). The conversation ended with discussions about creating a unified Facebook page for the board and potential collaboration with T-Mobile to provide MiFi hotspots at the library for public testing.

Next steps

Jeff

- Send one of his techs to Debbie Falco's location to check wireless signal and provide assessment (this is a repeat/clarification, but explicitly stated in the transcript).

Page

- Continue working with the web administrator to resolve Facebook page access/ownership issues and merge/transition old and new pages as needed; coordinate with Judy and David as needed.

Sherry

- Consider including recent broadband advancements, 5G expansion, digital literacy programs, and website/Facebook updates in the next newspaper article about Mathews broadband progress.

Jeff

- Review the updated T-Mobile license agreement for Hudgins Tower, send to Ramona for review, and coordinate site walk and drawing updates with T-Mobile's team.
- Coordinate and schedule site walkouts for both Hudgins and Bohannon towers with T-Mobile's team after lease agreement is finalized.
- Send Debbie Falco's home address (received from Tyler) to a tech to assess wireless internet options and signal strength at her location, and provide recommendations (including potential for external antenna).
- Work with T-Mobile to provide MiFi hotspots for the library so residents can check them out and test T-Mobile service at various locations in the county.

Collaboration

- Tyler, Page, Judy (and optionally David): Schedule a call in the next week to discuss and plan the public outreach strategy for the Broadband Advisory Board's Facebook page and website updates.

Summary

Broadband Advisory Board Meeting Review

The Broadband Advisory Board meeting began with Mathews welcoming attendees including Sherry, Marshall, Jeff, Tyler, Paige, and Debbie. The meeting focused on reviewing and approving minutes from the previous meeting, where Mathews explained that he had started using AI-generated summaries from Zoom to capture technical details more accurately. The group discussed the use of AI for meeting minutes, noting some potential spelling errors, and approved the minutes as written.

T-Mobile Monopole Tower Updates

Jeff provided an update on the two monopole towers, focusing on T-Mobile's progress. He reported receiving an updated license agreement for Hudgins Tower, which will be reviewed and sent to Ramona for signing. Once signed, a site walk will be conducted to update drawings for the telecom cabinet and fiber entry. T-Mobile has been working with a new firm to expedite the process, aiming to complete both towers before the end of the year, including a second space at Hudgins Tower rented at \$2,000 per month.

T-Mobile Lease Agreement Progress

The team discussed progress on a T-Mobile lease agreement, with Jeff indicating they need to fast-track the process and review the site plan. They confirmed that revenue from lease payments goes into the general fund, with Ramona clarifying that unspent budget amounts will return to the general fund at year-end rather than rolling over. The conversation ended with a discussion about wireless internet access in the county, where Mathews mentioned receiving frequent inquiries from citizens about connectivity options, particularly regarding Verizon Wireless Home Internet.

T-Mobile Home Wireless Service Review

Page Herbert shared his positive experience with T-Mobile home wireless service, noting significant improvements in speed and connectivity compared to his previous MiFi hotspot. He mentioned the service costs \$35 per month for unlimited data when bundled with a phone line, which is a substantial savings over his previous plan. Jeff provided technical details about the service's speeds and mentioned the option for external antennas to boost performance, similar to Starlink. Mathews emphasized the financial benefit for county residents, highlighting the significant monthly savings many are experiencing.

Wireless Connectivity and 5G Implementation

Mathews discussed the successful implementation of wireless connectivity, noting positive feedback from users and the option to switch from fiber. Debbie inquired about 5G service availability near the Bohannon Tower, and Jeff explained that 5G should be available but may depend on phone settings and distance from the tower. Jeff suggested checking phone settings and offered to have techs assess the situation, including the possibility of using an external antenna or waiting for T-Mobile's infrastructure to improve service and pricing options.

Verizon Wireless Service Improvement Update

RealWork reported improved Verizon wireless service at Williams Wharf, with download speeds reaching 120 Mbps and upload speeds of 10 Mbps, following recent tower adjustments by Verizon engineers. The team discussed challenges with service verification, noting that calls to check availability may initially show no service but will work after a second attempt. Mathews highlighted the importance of promoting digital literacy resources, particularly through the library's online classes, and shared an example of a resident who lost internet service when Virginia Broadband went out of business.

Satellite Internet Service Options

Mathews discussed the availability and affordability of satellite internet services from companies like Starlink and Amazon, noting that prices have decreased and service has improved in the area. He encouraged residents to contact Verizon Wireless and T-Mobile offices in Gloucester to explore connectivity options and mentioned that Jeff assists with installations and assessments. Mathews also suggested checking library hotspots as a preliminary test before considering Verizon Home Internet. The discussion concluded with Mathews raising a question about combining wireless data from existing carriers with satellite services to achieve competitive pricing.

Public Safety Connectivity Solutions Discussion

The group discussed connectivity solutions for public safety and business applications, focusing on multi-carrier and satellite options. Jeff explained the use of tri-band modems with dual SIM capabilities for public safety vehicles to ensure continuous connectivity across different carriers and Starlink. Tyler mentioned T-Mobile's new Super Broadband service, which provides an unlimited 5G data plan with Starlink as a redundant backup. Mathews emphasized the importance of reliable connectivity for businesses, noting the challenges of achieving 100% availability with wireless connections compared to wireline networks.

Wireless Coverage Expansion Plans

Jeff and Mathews discussed recent developments in wireless coverage in Mathews County, highlighting T-Mobile's partnership with Starlink and the expansion of Verizon Wireless towers. Mathews mentioned upcoming plans for additional towers at Cop Street and Beelec, as well as a joint planning meeting on May 26th to discuss the CUP for the Gwens Island Tower. They also touched on the potential arrival of fiber internet in June, noting that while it may serve fewer unserved residents due to ongoing improvements in wireless coverage, some residents remain hesitant about switching providers.

Project Updates and Strategic Deals

The group discussed several ongoing projects and updates. Jeff explained that T-Mobile secured a deal with Starlink ahead of Verizon due to T-Mobile's market growth over the past five years and strategic acquisitions. Mathews reported that the Tiny Smart Home project faces challenges as the original teacher is no longer available, though Dr. Daniel is seeking a replacement to continue the four-year program. Tyler provided an update on the library telehealth project, noting that while an announcement was made about potential deployment within two months, previous similar announcements had not materialized, leaving the timeline uncertain.

Facebook Page Consolidation Planning

The group discussed consolidating an existing Facebook page for the Mathews Broadband Advisory Board. David agreed to work with the web administrator to merge the old page with a new one, and Mathews confirmed he had access to the login credentials. The team discussed making the page more accessible to the public and potentially adding administrators. Tyler suggested involving Yumi and Judy in planning the page's strategy. The group also discussed incorporating broadband advancements and digital literacy programs into an upcoming article by Sherry. Jeff offered to explore getting additional MiFi hotspots from T-Mobile for testing and public use at the library. The next Board of Supervisors meeting was scheduled for May 21st, with a joint Planning and Zoning meeting on May 26th to consider a Verizon Wireless tower proposal (Gwynn's Island).

Meeting Adjourned 9:48 AM

*Respectfully submitted,
Judy Rowe and AI*