



MATHEWS BROADBAND ADVISORY BOARD MEETING

11 August 2026

MINUTES

*Judy Rowe; *Willie Love; *Greg Lewis; *Marshall Ruffin, M.D.;
David Walsh, BOS; Tyler Beekhoo, BTS; Jeff Beekhoo, BTS; Joe
Syslo, EDA *Voting Member; Quorum = 5 voting members

Call to order: 9:00 AM

July Minutes: not available.

BAB Project Updates

The Broadband Advisory Board meeting began with the Chair welcoming attendees and announcing that Chandler Vaughn, the new director of the Virginia Office of Broadband, would join at 9:30. Jeff provided an update on monopole tower projects, reporting that the T-Mobile site at Rescue Squad is 85% complete pending a final license agreement, with Bohannon expected to follow soon after. Tyler discussed the status of BEAD awards, revealing that RiverStreet Networks, which was supposed to receive a major fiber project, is now in trouble and may have its contracts rescinded due to defaults, leaving uncertainty about the fate of Mathews County's allocated \$5.5+ million in funding.

BEAD Funding

Judy and Tyler discussed concerns about BEAD money allocation and the need to monitor funds to prevent co-mingling with VATI projects, particularly for RiverStreet. They noted that while ISPs and NTIA previously pushed for shortcuts in local control over construction and zoning, these aspects were removed from BEAD revisions.

AT&T Tower possibility

The group also discussed the AT&T Tower project, which has a pending conditional use permit application under review by the planning commission due to non-tidal wetlands mitigation requirements. Jeff and Mathews observed a competitive situation between Verizon and AT&T, both seeking

to place towers within a mile of each other, with Verizon's proposed location having less mitigation requirements.

Tower Placement Strategy Discussion

Chair thanked Willie for representing their interests at the Planning and Zoning Commission meeting and discussed concerns about tower placement within a mile of each other. Jeff reported difficulties in contacting AT&T representatives about potentially using our tower, as his previous contact had left the company. The group discussed how technology advancements, particularly with 195-foot monopole towers, have changed the approach to tower placement and bandwidth requirements, with Jeff explaining that competition between AT&T and Verizon Wireless likely means only one company will succeed in placing a tower within the two-mile radius.

The group discussed property options for tower placement, including county-owned land and private properties in the Diggs and New Point areas, with Ramona investigating Middle Peninsula Chesapeake Bay Public Access Authority-managed properties. The team clarified that the previous wireless internet service map is not applicable for current tower requirements due to different technology needs. The BAB wants to send a letter to Verizon Wireless from the BOS Requesting they continue with towers in both the New Point and Diggs areas which need service. Judy is hoping to get answers so that the letter can go before the BOS on the 20th to be approved and sent.

Website

Tyler and Page are working on improving the website's Connectivity Guide functionality, including making it more visible on mobile devices.

Telehealth Update

Marshall briefly mentioned discussions about telehealth opportunities with Vickie Morgan, a retired nurse executive, who will explore potential grants with Charlie Frazier

Chandler Vaughn, Director Virginia Office of Broadband joined:

Chandler explained that RiverStreet Networks' BEAD award is at risk due to the company's inability to secure additional financing, leading to potential

contract termination and the need for re-bidding. Chandler also discussed the deactivation of Open Broadband's network, noting that this is part of a broader pattern of wireless provider shutdowns across Virginia and that the department is working with legislators to address affected areas. The discussion focused primarily on the status of RiverStreet's funding and the potential implications for fiber broadband expansion in Mathews County.

Chandler explained that RiverStreet's financing issues were not apparent during the initial BEAD proposal evaluation, as the company had documented financing and appeared to be a high-performing provider building out to thousands of homes monthly. When asked about similar issues with other contracts, Chandler noted that some companies across the state are experiencing cash flow problems due to changing interest rates. Chandler outlined two main options moving forward: applying for state funding through the Virginia Telecommunication Initiative (VATI) program, or rebidding the BEAD project, though the latter may be limited to the original \$5+ million award amount.

Three Possible Paths Forward

Chandler discussed three potential paths for Mathews County to proceed with broadband expansion after RiverStreet's default on their BEAD award. The first path involves applying for state funding through a \$25 million general fund process, where the county could partner with ISPs including wireless carriers if desired. The second path involves rebidding under BEAD, though this would require getting federal approval to potentially increase awards and potentially rebid multiple counties together. Chandler noted that combining with Gloucester County under BEAD would be challenging due to competitive bidding requirements, but could work under the state funding process. The third path involves \$800 million in remaining BEAD funding, though details were not fully explained. Chandler also clarified that previous American Rescue Plan funds from 2021 are no longer available due to December 31st spending requirements.

The group focused on discussing options for advancing broadband infrastructure in Mathews County, Virginia, following challenges with the initial BEAD (Broadband, Equity, Access, and Deployment) program awardee, RiverStreet. Chandler explained that Virginia received \$1.5 billion under the BEAD program, with approximately \$800 million remaining unallocated, and outlined three potential paths forward: increasing the existing \$5 million award for Mathews County, accessing unspent BEAD

funds for non-deployment, or pursuing VATI funding. The group discussed engaging with Verizon as a potential new provider, noting that costs and technology have evolved since their previous proposal, and agreed to pursue possible future rebid.

Asking Help from Politicians at State and Federal Levels

Judy and Willie have contacted Senator Warner. Congressman Wittman, and Keith Hodges. Nick Matatesta, Warner's Aide in DC Office, has met with us several times to keep us posted on what Warner will do. He noted Warner was furious.

Ideas From Our Team

Jeff: Put together a proposal for cell carriers to come in with wireless home internet and incorporate public safety: VZW or TMO.

Willie: Put together a smorgasbord of packages to attract more providers.

Tyler: Verizon's proposal at \$12K per passing is closer to the baseline for Virginia \$10.5K per passing as opposed to RiverStreet's \$5K. The landscape and the technology are changing daily. Need to make BEAD Funds work for us. Fight for funding to stretch as far as we can, and then we need to look at VATI to follow BEAD.

Adjourned 10:25 AM

Respectfully submitted,

Zoom AI & Judy Rowe