



County of Augusta
Internet Initiative (Broadband Committee)
PO Box 590
Verona, VA 24482

Thursday, February 27, 2020 7:00 pm
Augusta County Government Center
South Board Room

MINUTES

PRESENT: Mr. Lawhorne, Riverheads District
Mr. Powell, Middle River District
Mr. Journell, Beverly Manor District
Ms. Whetzel, Deputy County Administrator

ABSENT: Mr. McHaffa, South River District
Mr. Craig, Wayne District
Mr. Henderson, Pastures District
Ms. Thornton, North River District
Ms. Carter, Board of Supervisors Liaison
Mr. Morelli, Board of Supervisors Liaison
Ms. Susie Miller, Sub-Committee

VIRGINIA: At the regular meeting of the Augusta County Internet Initiative (Broadband Committee) held on Thursday, February 27, 2020 at 7:00pm in the South Board Room at the Augusta County Government Center, Verona, Virginia.

Call to Order

Meeting started at 7:00pm. A quorum was not present.

Adoption of the Minutes

Minutes from the January 23, 2020 meeting were not approved due to the lack of a quorum.

Comments by the Public

None

Special Presentations

None

Matters to be Presented by Sub-Committees

None

Matters to be Presented by Staff

Ms. Whetzel reviewed feedback from DHCD on the County's VATI 2020 application. Augusta's application was 28 out of 38 applications received. Low scores were given on number of houses passed in the project area and local match percentage. Middle scores were given on anticipated service overlap, number of businesses and community anchors, marketing activity, and locality participation. High scores were given for speed of service, cost details and project readiness. DHCD suggested the County pursue additional marketing activities, strengthen language about permit requirements, and contact other providers that may be in the project area. The Committee discussed the VATI application process and



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grading. In appearance, the most rural areas are not being awarded funding due to low number of homes served. Staff effort may need to be focused in other areas (Dominion, SVEC) to try to extend service.

Commonwealth Connect will hold a Broadband Forum in Albemarle County on June 4.

The Virginia Commonwealth Connect Broadband Team is gathering contacts from localities.

The Committee reviewed statistics from BroadbandNow. Augusta ranked 1653 out of 3143 localities, noting 4 wired providers, lowest monthly price of \$60.48, 79.3% of the population with wired broadband coverage, 15,233 population unserved and 11.3% fiber penetration.

The FCC is developing more precise broadband maps as part of the Digital Opportunity Data Collection in order to address concerns about misleading coverage maps.

BARC is expanding broadband service and their customers located in Augusta County may benefit.

The Committee reviewed the map of Dominion Energy service in Augusta County. Staff spoke with Dominion Energy as a follow-up to the RFI response the County submitted re: Rural Broadband pilot funding. Dominion Energy would build the middle mile fiber to their substations and an internet service provider would connect the customers. Projects would need to be in an area that are considered underserved per FCC data and that would have a Dominion substation. A commission reviews projects. Staff has sent provider contacts to the Dominion representative as no providers responded to their RFI. The rep noted that localities such as Augusta are the future of the program, as those localities served entirely by one electric provider are easier projects. There is no easy situation to fix broadband services in Augusta County, so there will need to be creative solutions to close the gap to serve pockets of unserved customers.

Old Business

The Committee reviewed the draft website pages and noted to include all grants activity (even if County did not receive award), add a "steps to take" item to assist citizens and make additions to list of providers. The consensus is to have formal announcement when the page goes live on the County website.

New Business

Mr. Lawhorne questioned how Economic Development dollars could be justified for broadband. Mr. Powell noted that money will need to be set aside in the County budget in order to make progress on expansion of services. A member of the public stated that we need to get the ear of who manages grants and set futuristic goals on speed of service provided.

Adjournment

The next meeting will be held March 26, 2020 at 7 pm in the South Board Room. With no further discussion by the committee, the meeting adjourned.