



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

Thursday, October 22, 2020 7:00 pm
In Person and Via Electronic Means Due to COVID-19

MINUTES

PRESENT: Mr. Powell, Middle River District
Mr. Lawhorne, Riverheads District
Mr. Carter, South River District
Ms. Carter, Board of Supervisors Liaison
Mr. Morelli, Board of Supervisors Liaison
Ms. Whetzel, Deputy County Administrator
Ms. Kiracofe, Asst. Superintendent for Instruction & Technology

ABSENT: Mr. Henderson, Pastures District
Mr. Journell, Beverly Manor District
Mr. Kirby, Wayne District
Ms. Thornton, North River District

VIRGINIA: At the regular meeting of the Augusta County Internet Initiative (Broadband Committee) held on Thursday, October 22, 2020 at 7:00pm via in person and electronic means. The Government Center was open to the public on the date of the meeting but some attendees participated through electronic means due to COVID-19.

Call to Order

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

Adoption of the Minutes

Minutes 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 the responses to DHCD for the VATI 2021 Challenges. The letters noted outreach efforts to Comcast and the use of the Comcast website to identify if there was existing overlap. Re-scoping the projects was also mentioned.

The Governor announced \$30 million in CARES funding for broadband projects that can be fast-tracked, i.e. completed by Dec. 25, 2020. Money is on a first come/first serve basis and a locality is required to submit the application and certify that the requirements of the CARES Act will be met. Ms. Whetzel reached out to local providers in Augusta County to see if they have a planned and shovel project that

may meet this timeline. She shared guidance provided to localities and included the application. Three providers expressed interest in the funding source and two are actively working on information for an application. The next Board of Supervisors meeting is October 28, 2020. Projects and local match will be discussed then.

Mr. Morelli received a call from Dominion Energy about partnership on the state approved pilot program. Ms. Whetzel shared information about the conference call, including history of submission of a proposal in response to Dominion Energy's RFI, follow up discussions, and ISP provider information.

BARC prepared a rough estimate of the cost to provide FTTH service to the southern portion of Augusta County that is in their auction area. The total project would be around \$9 million. The project could be a future grant project.

SVEC provided information to the County on their feasibility study. They tentatively plan to provide backbone fiber to their assets and partner with local providers for last-mile service.

Ms. Whetzel provided information to the Committee on the new RISE program offered by Comcast.

Matters to be Presented by the Committee

Mr. Lawhorne updated the Committee on a conversation with Comcast representatives. Comcast will not give us information on subscribers as it is proprietary, but if the County identifies project areas in need of broadband, the County can send the list of addresses and their engineers can look at it.

Ms. Carter noted that she attended a meeting with a local provider and the Augusta County Service Authority to discuss use of infrastructure for broadband purposes. She will be visiting the Pendleton County Schools on Friday to review what they have planned for furthering broadband in the community. The County will be mentioned in a National Association of Counties (NACO) article on rural broadband and telehealth.

Old Business

A contact list was provided to the Committee.

New Business

The Broadband Committee will receive a stipend for meeting attendance in keeping with other County Boards and Commissions. Payments will be from July 1, 2020 forward.

Ms. Kiracofe noted that the broadband service at the schools is good. The school system received 125 hotspots with T-mobile utilizing CARES funding. Some students are struggling with wi-fi and they are trying to determine weaknesses and deficits. To help parents have access for students, Chromebooks were ordered with CARES funding with hopes they will be in December 1. The Chromebooks are provided to students third grade and higher.

Adjournment

The next meeting will be held November 19 or December 3, 2020 at 7 pm in a format to be determined. With no further discussion by the committee, the meeting adjourned.