



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

Thursday, February 25, 2021 7:00 pm
In Person and Via Electronic Means Due to COVID-19

MINUTES

PRESENT: Mr. Lawhorne, Riverheads District
Mr. Carter, South River District
Mr. Kirby, Wayne District
Ms. Thornton, North River District
Mr. Powell, Middle River District
Mr. Journell, Beverly Manor District
Ms. Carter, Board of Supervisors Liaison
Ms. Whetzel, Deputy County Administrator
Ms. Kiracofe, Asst. Superintendent for Instruction & Technology

ABSENT: Mr. Henderson, Pastures District

VIRGINIA: At the regular meeting of the Augusta County Internet Initiative (Broadband Committee) held on Thursday, February 25, 2021 at 7:00 pm 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 present.

Adoption of the Minutes

Minutes of the December 3, 2020 and January 28, 2021 meeting were approved.

Comments by the Public

Mr. Barley shared his experience with installing T-Mobile Home Internet. Independent speed test is Broadband (+40/+3 mbps up/down). Residents who have some 4g/LTE service should see similar or better results. Verizon has a similar service. Both T-Mobile and Verizon also offer a 5g option. Cost is zero for equipment, \$50 per month, unlimited data.

Special Presentations

Mr. Keyser of BARC presented information about the Cooperative and the future broadband project in Augusta County. The project is funded in part by CAF, which provides installments over 10 years and loans for construction. Approximately 500 miles of fiber will be laid in the next year.

Matters to be Presented by Sub-Committees

None

Matters to be Presented by Staff

CARES Fast Track Broadband Update – Lingo Project #2 36 FTTH Installation –65% has been paid to date (grant and County match).

Ms. Whetzel noted that we are still waiting on more awards of VATI after consideration of RDOF and re-scope.

Comcast is looking for community spaces that could be used as Lift Zones. The space would be served by Comcast high speed internet. The space would require supervision. Ms. Kiracofe noted that the location would not need computers, as most students have computers. The Committee requested that the information be distributed to them and Ms. Kiracofe noted that she will pass it onto school principals to see if they have ideas for a location.

Mr. Martin, Director of the Augusta County Service Authority, and Harvey Almarode, Broadband Committee Chair for ASCA, updated the Committee on the outcomes from their last meeting. New Hope Telephone and MGW gave a summary of their CARES Act projects to the Board. ACSA decided to hold onto the tower discussed at the last Committee meeting and work out plans to lease space. ACSA will need to ensure that their work on broadband doesn't go beyond the confines of their charter.

Matters to be Presented by the Committee

None

Old Business

The Committee elected officers from the nominations made at the February meeting for 2021 Officers: Chairman – JR Lawhorne, Vice-Chairman – David Henderson.

New Business

Ms. Carter began discussion on the purpose of the Committee. The overall consensus from the discussion was that the Committee is an advocate with vendors and grant providers, an advocate for furthering projects in the County, to keep the Board of Supervisors informed, an advocate for funding for grant matches and to keep up the momentum regarding expansion of broadband in the County.

Ms. Carter discussed the need for a strategic plan to focus on the locations of need so that we can focus more closely on grants for those areas.

An updated list of members and contact information was distributed to the Committee.

Requests were made for future presentations by Shentel, T-mobile, Lumos, Firefly and SVEC.

Adjournment

The next meeting will be held March 25, 2021 at 7 pm at the Government Center and via Zoom. With no further discussion by the committee, the meeting adjourned.