



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

Thursday, June 24, 2021 7:00 pm
In Person and Via Electronic Means Due to COVID-19

MINUTES

PRESENT: Mr. Lawhorne, Chairman, Riverheads District
Mr. Henderson, Vice-Chairman, Pastures District
Mr. Kirby, Wayne District
Mr. Powell, Middle River District
Ms. Whetzel, Deputy County Administrator

ABSENT: Ms. Thornton, North River District
Mr. Journell, Beverly Manor District
Mr. Carter, South River District
Ms. Carter, Board of Supervisors Liaison
Ms. Kiracofe, Asst. Superintendent for Instruction & Technology

VIRGINIA: At the regular meeting of the Augusta County Internet Initiative (Broadband Committee) held on Thursday, June 24, 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 May 27, 2021 meeting were approved.

Comments by the Public

Mr. Rogers expressed thanks to the Committee for its role in getting broadband to his area via the VATI 2021 grant.

Mr. Barley noted that the South River Citizens for Broadband are collecting responses to a survey for broadband needs in the South River District.

Special Presentations

None

Matters to be Presented by Sub-Committees

Mr. Henderson discussed having each Committee member review their District and get feedback from citizens as to where service is needed. This will assist in providing a wish list by location that can be shared with providers.

Ms. Whetzel noted that the Virginia Office on Broadband expects there to be one entry point for applications that would utilize the VATI and American Rescue Plan (ARP) funding at the State level. The County has also received ARP funding that could assist in increasing local match for VATI applications so they score higher. Ms. Whetzel noted that there has been interest from providers in the County; including Lumos, Shentel, MGW, New Hope Telephone and BARC.

Matters to be Presented by Staff

VATI 2021 Update – MGW and the County will submit the final documents for the DHCD contract. The State will review the documents and execute the contract. The State is requiring new documents for this grant round, including milestones for construction. The milestones will be compared to drawdowns to ensure that the project is moving along. The contract also includes a 10% retainage and a non-performance clause.

VATI 2022 Update – Ms. Whetzel reviewed the Request for Information (RFI) to gather proposals from area providers to partner on a grant. The proposals are due July 23 so that notice can be sent to DHCD by July 27. Applications are due in early September. Ms. Whetzel attended a DHCD webinar on the how to apply and will issue an Addendum to the RFI that further clarifies the funding available, acceptance of regional projects, retainage requirements, technical support, special construction costs and definitions, federal funding and universal coverage. Universal coverage would require the entire locality to be served if they utilize RFOF funding. If the entire locality cannot be served, a plan should be included in the application that describes how it will be served through future projects. The Committee discussed having a provider meeting prior to the proposal due date.

The Committee reviewed the 2021 Internet Survey and offered suggestions and corrections. The survey will be prepared by ZenCity and they will provide a report of the results. The survey will be distributed through social media, news outlets, library/government center and area newsletters.

Ms. Whetzel met with the library and schools to review the Emergency Connectivity Funding. Eligible expenditures include hotspots and data plans, or expanding access to wifi. The Library and Schools will review the current use and determine if an application should be submitted. The application is rolling and opens the end of June.

Matters to be Presented by the Committee

Mr. Henderson noted that the Infrastructure Bill is under discussion in Congress.

Old Business

None

New Business

Adjournment

The next meeting will be held July 22, 2021 at 7 pm at the Government Center. With no further discussion by the committee, the meeting adjourned.