



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

Thursday, September 23, 2021 7:00 pm

MINUTES

PRESENT: Mr. Lawhorne, Chairman, Riverheads District
Mr. Henderson, Vice-Chairman, Pastures District
Mr. Powell, Middle River District
Ms. Thornton, North River District
Mr. Kirby, Wayne District
Ms. Kiracofe, Asst. Superintendent for Instruction & Technology
Ms. Whetzel, Deputy County Administrator

ABSENT: Vacant, Beverly Manor District
Mr. Carter, South River District
Ms. Carter, Board of Supervisors Liaison

VIRGINIA: At the regular meeting of the Augusta County Internet Initiative (Broadband Committee) held on Thursday, September 23, 2021 at 7:00 pm in person. The Government Center was open to the public on the date of the meeting. Members of the Committee may participate in a meeting through electronic communication means in accordance with the provisions of the Code of Virginia Section 2.2-3708.2.

Call to Order

Meeting started at 7:00pm. A quorum was present.

Adoption of the Minutes

Minutes of the August 24, 2021 meeting were approved.

Comments by the Public

Mr. Martin mentioned that he has run across several articles throughout the state in relation to broadband projects.

Special Presentations

None

Matters to be Presented by Sub-Committees

None

Matters to be Presented by Staff

Ms. Whetzel provided an update on the VATI 2021 grant that is under construction by MGW/Lingo Networks. The Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) have added additional criteria for reimbursement of funds from the grant. The provider and County must show that estimated milestones are met and that the request for funds meets a Cost Performance Index (CPI) of 90% or more. Through the CPI, DHCD monitors the progress of the project and matches that project to the funds requested. Both the County and DHCD are withholding a 10% retainage from invoices until the project is completed. Below is a summary of work to date:

Project Area	Total Passings	Passings to Date 8/31
McDowell	235	30
Morris Mill	288	64
Deerfield	508	
Middlebrook	142	
Total	1173	94
% Completed		8%

Total Project Budget: \$1,814,876

Spent to Date 138,470

Grant to Date 87,236 Retainage held of \$9,693

Locality Funds to Date 14,955 Retainage held of \$1,662

Provider Funds to Date 24,925

Ms. Whetzel reviewed the VATI 2022 grant summary provided by DCHD. There were 57 grants statewide that included 84 localities for a total of \$943 million in VATI requests and \$1,159 billion in local funds. Total passings were approximately 300,000. The State has committed \$750 million to broadband projects thus far. Augusta County is included in the regional application with 7 other localities in the Valley. The application includes 42,693 passings for a total of \$306 million in project costs and requests \$97 million from VATI. Augusta County's share of the application is requesting \$20.7 million in VATI funds and includes \$44 million in match funds (\$8.4 million from the County) for a total project cost of \$65 million. There are approximately 6,800 passings in Augusta.

Next steps included the challenge process for the utility leverage program. A survey tool on the AllPoints website will allow citizens to comment on service at their location. The VATI challenges are due on Oct. 21 to DHCD and the County should be notified of the challenge the following week. Rebuttals are due to DHCD on Nov. 18 and DHCD is scheduled to make a determination on Dec. 3. Current DHCD schedule shows VATI awards being announced in December 2021.

Ms. Whetzel is working with New Hope Telephone Coop and MGW Networks to gather information to complete reporting for the CARES Projects that were awarded in 2020. Deadline is in Jan 2022.

BARC will be working on their project in the southern portion of the County.

Matters to be Presented by the Committee

Mr. Journell has resigned from the Committee.

Ms. Kiracofe noted that the schools have upgraded their services for broadband.

If the County is not awarded the VATI grant, there will be discussion to keep the current allocation for broadband opportunities.

Old Business

None

New Business

The Economic Development Authority requested a presentation on broadband at their October 21 meeting.

Adjournment

The next regularly scheduled meeting will be October 28, 2021 at 7pm in the Smith West Room. With no further discussion by the committee, the meeting adjourned.