

Lancaster County Broadband Authority



Minutes of Meeting

August 31, 2018 9:30 a.m.

County Administration Building

1. Call to Order & Approval of Minutes: The regular meeting of the Lancaster County Broadband Authority convened at 9:30 a.m. in the conference room behind the public meeting room. Cassie Thompson, Gary Silverman, Kevin Bean, Margie Armen and David Pere were present along with Supervisor Bob Westbrook and guest Chris Henley (a member of the Middlesex County Broadband Authority) and Eric Weik. Eric is a resident of Mollusk who is unable to run his business because of lack of internet and who wants to be helpful to the Authority. Corrected minutes of the August 24 meeting were approved as presented.

2. New Business:

A. External Communications Discussion

Cassie initiated a discussion of how we should interact with parties outside the Authority. This discussion arose because of an email sent to the Eagle Landing representatives after the August 17 meeting that contained information the Authority was not ready to release. The email caused consternation to other Authority members and it is not known how the message was interpreted by the recipients. To ensure that this kind of situation does not occur again, a summary of our expectations was offered to clarify our practices regarding communication with individuals or businesses outside the Authority. It reads as follows:

“The Lancaster County Broadband Authority acts collectively as a body, and makes decisions by recorded vote. The Chair is solely responsible for communicating the Authority’s decisions to the Board of Supervisors, the community, potential service providers, and anyone affected by the Authority’s decisions.

“Individual board members are expected to undertake information gathering within their areas of responsibility (organization, outreach, finance, technical, policy/legal) and bring that information to the Authority for its consideration and action. Individual board members are also expected to carry out the tasks delegated during board meetings and report outcomes to the Authority, either at the next meeting or by email.

“Fragmented or conflicting external communications are not in the Authority’s interest or the public interest. Individual board members must use professional judgment and discretion and absolutely respect the Authority’s prerogative to act as a whole.”

B. Review of Conversation with the Center for Innovative Technology (CIT)

Cassie called attention to her summary of last week's conversation with Jean Plymale of CIT. (Attached.) The question for us to consider is whether we should apply for a planning grant from the Department of Housing and Community Development (DCHD) funded by the federal Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program. A CDBG grant could provide up to \$30,000 for planning and any excess funds not needed for planning can be used toward a request for proposals (RFP) on design. However, there would be a lot of requirements to both apply for and then comply with the grant terms. This could delay our schedule to complete the assessment and issue our design RFP. On the other hand, Jean indicated that with a number of new requirements being layered on CIGT, our survey may be delayed anyway, so the issue of delay is perhaps not such a big impediment to applying for a planning grant. There are upsides to receiving a planning grant as well, including a presumption that, if we have followed the steps in the grant's specified process, we are well qualified for later funding opportunities that may arise.

Cassie encouraged Gary to continue to pursue DCHD information so that we can keep the door open on this as well as on VATI.

C. Contact with Middlesex County Broadband Authority

Kevin invited his co-worker, Chris Henley to attend our meeting. Chris is a newly-appointed member of the Middlesex Authority and he indicated that he personally would like to be helpful in keeping an open line of communications between our two entities. On a matter of mutual concern, the laying of an underwater conduit that could connect our two counties, he indicated that Middlesex has already contacted the contractor laying Dominion's underwater lines. He also said he would inquire whether Middlesex could share its CIT survey that was conducted some time back. Cassie thanked him for his interest. She indicated that we would follow up.

D. Board of Supervisors

Cassie attended the meeting of the Board of Supervisors on August 30, and she recommended that the Board's meeting with Atlantic Broadband be postponed because they have not provided the service map and other information that was requested in order to allow Supervisors to prepare for the meeting. It was also mentioned at the Board meeting that Jim Cornwell would file our Articles of Incorporation on behalf of the County.

3. Old Business:

Bob Westbrook raised an item that is still unresolved from the original meeting with Eagle Landing. At that meeting Representative Wittman and State Senator McDougal mentioned funds that would be provided for an accurate map. Margie believes that funding may be part of the Rural Utilities Service (RUS) program. Comments on the map have been solicited as a part of the Notice of Proposed Rulemaking that has been issued. Robin Meigle may be able

to provide more information on that. Margie indicated that we would still like to provide comments on behalf of the Authority. Comment period closes September 10.

Several matters were also raised with regard to the survey. We have discussed whether it might be possible to get funding support from the Economic Development Authority, but we should try to get a grant proposal together soon. To do that, we need to have a pretty firm idea of the cost, printing, mailing and collating data. Bob raised concern that the response rate needs to be substantial if the results are to have any credibility. CIT has cited response rates in the 10 – 15% range, which would not be acceptable to us. Eric said he would be glad to sit in front of Walmart and hand out surveys if that would help at some point — our first volunteer!

4. Pending Actions and Tasks:

Policy/Legal

Margie reminded everyone to file their Financial Disclosure Statements if they haven't done so already. She will also contact Jim Cornwell to check on filing the Articles of Incorporation and remind Don Gill about placing the notice of our meeting time in the Rappahannock Record Calendar column. She will also follow up on submitting comments on the RUS Notice and on drafting our By Laws.

Outreach

Bob will help us get mailing information for the survey from the County tax files.

Technical

Kevin will circulate information regarding our email addresses.

Finance

Gary will schedule a meeting with Tarmara Holmes of DCHD to discuss CDBG and VATI (VATI's "How to Apply" seminar is set for September). Margie will join for that meeting.

Margie is gathering information for the budget. All members need to be documenting their probable expenses, including information on out-of-pocket expenses we should request reimbursement for.

5. Schedule Next Meeting(s) and Adjourn. The next meeting will be at the regular place and time: the public meeting room at 9:30 on September 7. The meeting adjourned at 11:45 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Margie Armen,
Secretary

Attachment

Cassie Thompson's Summary of 8/24 Discussion with Jean Plymale of CIT

1) General Observations

I asked Jean about the survey, noting that we had taken CIT's advice and had begun an outreach program re the survey and that we were looking for a 1 Oct date to begin the survey. I asked if CIT would still be able to meet that date. She noted that there has been a great deal going on with things hitting them from different directions including VATI. They are behind but she will try and keep this on track with the 1 Oct date. So, there may be some slippage. We'll see.

Also, she noted that we do not need a PPEA in place for a VATI grant now but yes for the RFP.

2) Does Lancaster County support, by way of application and match, the HOA that is working with ABB to expand cable service to 54 households?

Pros:

- 54 households get service.

Cons:

- Only 54 households get service.
- Lancaster County might be expected to provide match funding.
- If HOA project is funded this round, Lancaster will likely NOT get funded for the next round of VATI. The only possibility for a second round of funding would be if we had a project with a different provider.
- Project scope does not match county objectives.
- There are 134 localities in Virginia that could request funds and there is not enough money for all.

Jean recommends we attend the September Workshop on how to apply for VATI. The VATI application process opens in September and the deadline for applications will be in December.

3) Does Lancaster go with the DHCD pilot process (CDBG funding) which integrates CIT Path process?

Pros:

- DHCD funding (probably in the neighborhood of \$30K) would be available for use to implement planning processes; survey mailings, meetings and other needs.
- Surplus funds could be used to fund a detailed network design for a broadband provider.
- Assumed advantage working through the CIT Path process when applying for future funding.
- Lancaster could have a partnership in place and a network buildout plan ready for next VATI funding cycle.

Cons:

- DCHD's timeline is set and the process to be followed by grantees is mostly agreed upon, but complying with the grant requirements could delay current Lancaster County timeline for completing our goals. King George used the DCHD process plan and they had to redo some steps to comply with DCHD grant requirements.
- We would need a formal project plan, but it does not have to be Microsoft Project.