



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

**Thursday, April 22, 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. Carter, South River District  
Mr. Kirby, Wayne District  
Mr. Powell, Middle River District  
Ms. Thornton, North River District  
Ms. Carter, Board of Supervisors Liaison  
Ms. Whetzel, Deputy County Administrator

**ABSENT:** Mr. Journell, Beverly Manor District  
Ms. Kiracofe, Asst. Superintendent for Instruction & Technology

VIRGINIA: At the regular meeting of the Augusta County Internet Initiative (Broadband Committee) held on Thursday, April 22, 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 March 25, 2021 meeting were approved.

### **Comments by the Public**

None

### **Special Presentations**

None

### **Matters to be Presented by Sub-Committees**

The presentation to the Board of Supervisors will not be next week, but scheduled for a future meeting.

Ms. Thornton discussed the e-mail she sent out about the American Rescue Plan funding noting the Office of Rural Development will be running the program and they have not determined a deadline or process yet. She will be attending a webinar about the funding.

### **Matters to be Presented by Staff**

CARES Fast Track Broadband Update – In the packet there was a letter that described the New Hope Telephone project. Lingo Networks sent the final bill for the CARES act funding to the County, so project #2 can be closed out.

VATI 2021 Update – MGW and the County had a contract negotiation call with DHCD and received the to-do list to get under contract. The County will consider the MOU between the County and MGW next week at the Board of Supervisors meeting. MGW is updating the construction schedule and budget. The DHCD contract will include provisions for clawback of funds, right of first refusal, and a cost performance index, which are added from DHCD's past experiences on VATI projects. DHCD deadline is July 6, but we are striving to be under contract sooner, as construction can start at that time. Construction will have an 18 month deadline. DHCD has approved a prior authorization request, which will allow for reimbursement of engineering and permitting fees from the grant even if they are completed before the contract date. Fiber purchases will need to come out of local match if they are made prior to the contract date.

VATI 2022 Update – Draft guidelines are included in the packet. Additions from prior year include: wireless projects will need to show 25% underserved/unserved, challengers will need to include polygons files showing their service area and these will not be exempt from FOIA, if a project has RDOF (federal) funding then it will need to show buildout for both federal and VATI projects, and a list of prior VATI grants received will need to be included in the application. Ms. Whetzel will attend a webinar on April 27 that discusses the guidelines. Public comment is open for the new guidance into May.

FCC speed test – Ms. Carter set up a call with the FCC to discuss the webpage they created about reporting complaints. The webpage is not detailed enough to provide accurate data to the FCC. The FCC noted that there will be a second part to gathering info and that is under design now. The FCC also put out info about an app that can test speeds.

Ms. Whetzel had a call with Shentel about potential grant opportunities.

### **Matters to be Presented by the Committee**

None

### **Old Business**

None

### **New Business**

Ms. Carter updated the Committee about the meeting she attended with BARC/Senator Warner. Warner spoke about federal dollars coming to the County and State for broadband and the deadline is Dec 2024.

Ms. Carter sent info from Nelson County about their Authority, which has now been taken over by Central Virginia Electric Coop. Mr. Barley noted that the Authority subsidized expansion of broadband, much like Augusta is doing now with grant matches.

Ms. Carter requested that staff keep apprised of what the schools will be getting for ARP funding, as some may assist with Broadband issues.

Ms. Carter attended a meeting with Shenandoah Valley Technology Council and they noted that they may be able to help with plans for broadband. Ms. Whetzel noted that there may need to be nondisclosure agreements between providers and consultants in order for providers to disclose their assets.

The FCC put out a bulletin about Emergency Broadband benefit funding, which assists with paying for broadband services for households (affordability).

### **Adjournment**

The next meeting will be held May 27, 2021 at 7 pm at the Government Center and via Zoom. With no further discussion by the committee, the meeting adjourned.