

## CAMPBELL COUNTY BROADBAND AUTHORITY

April 2, 2019

A meeting of the Campbell County Broadband Authority was held on the 2<sup>nd</sup> day of April 2019 in the Board of Supervisors meeting room of the Walter J. Haberer Building, Rustburg, Virginia. The members present were:

Charlie A. Watts II, Chairman, Presiding	Brookneal Election District
James A. Borland	Spring Hill Election District
Bob Good	Sunburst Election District
Eddie Gunter, Jr.	Concord Election District
Jon R. Hardie	Rustburg Election District
Susan R. Hogg (arrived 5:10 p.m.)	Timberlake Election District
A. Dale Moore	Altavista Election District

Also present were:

Frank J. Rogers, County Administrator  
Clifton M. Tweedy, Deputy County Administrator  
Catherine H. Moore, Clerk

Chairman Watts called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m. and welcomed everyone to a meeting of the Campbell County Broadband Authority (CCBA).

Now that the Authority had received information from a panel of experts, learned about the Bedford County model, learned about TV White Space and received additional reports, staff suggested there be discussion to determine the next steps. The maps showing the underserved and unserved areas of the County were reviewed acknowledging the coverage areas may be overstated. Staff had met with representatives from U. S. Cellular and Shentel. In fact, the representatives reached out to the County after learning of the activities of the Broadband Authority. While there was good conversation with the providers, they had as many questions as the County had. In light of those conversations, Administrator Rogers believed it was important for the Authority to provide a clear statement of its objectives including timelines and available resources.

Supervisor Good suggested one place to start was learning what it would cost for a company such as Shentel to expand into some of the more populated areas of the County, areas that would make the most business sense and be the most profitable for them and how the County might partner with them to make that happen. Administrator Rogers confirmed staff did ask the providers where they planned to expand, and without revealing too much proprietary information, it appeared projects were planned in the Evington area. It may be well to ask how the County might encourage expansion in areas where they were already located out to less populated areas, but still enough critical mass to make it worthwhile.

Chairman Watts followed up with a question if a grant program might be a way to incentivize current providers to expand its service. Administrator Rogers confirmed an incentive program could be developed by identifying resources and invite the private sector to apply for the grants. This would allow the current providers or possibly other providers to come to the Authority with a proposal for expanding its service into an identified area, and the Authority could review that proposal to determine if it met its objectives. Administrator Rogers suggested the proposals could be developed similar to the Tobacco Commission by stating its target areas and objectives (such as affordability and minimum data speed) and specify how the responses would be ranked. As an alternative, the Authority could choose to follow the Bedford County model to hire a consultant, design a network and solicit proposals to provide the infrastructure. He estimated 18 to 24 months to complete that process.

Supervisor Borland was intrigued by the White Space technology and also the services offered by the satellite companies such as Dish Network and DIRECTV. He expressed some concern the Bedford County model did not embrace the free market economy and price fixing could be a result. How would an incentive program compare? Administrator Rogers was not sure of the level of competition that would result from the program, but certainly the opportunity would exist for any company to pursue a grant. Supervisor Borland also suggested the Authority be cognizant of encouraging a competitor into an area where another service exists that would undermine the free market competition. Administrator Rogers commented that one of the advantages of Campbell County's position in broadband development compared with neighboring localities is Campbell could learn what may or may not work and possibly participate in adjacent infrastructure opportunities. Supervisor Hogg was interested in knowing what the surrounding localities were doing as far as broadband.

Supervisor Gunter questioned the need for a consultant to have the benefits of an expert or establishing a Broadband Advisory Council. Administrator Rogers would not rule out a consultant, but instead of a consultant to design a tower network, he envisioned a consultant being used as an expert to review the technical details of proposals. As far as an Advisory Council, he was in favor of citizen engagement, but cautioned the members to formulate clear objectives for those members before moving in that direction.

Chairman Watts favored the development of an incentive program for the private sector. Following additional discussion, there was a consensus for staff to bring back a draft incentive program to the June meeting. The parameters would include such priorities as serving the underserved and unserved areas and data speeds. Staff would also invite SCS to the June meeting to find out more about the broadband projects in neighboring localities. The Authority also needed to keep in mind that in most cases, the locality paid down the costs of the infrastructure upfront. Therefore, how to fund the incentive program would need to be discussed.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:50 p.m.

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CHARLIE A. WATTS II, CHAIRMAN