

CAMPBELL COUNTY BROADBAND AUTHORITY

June 4, 2019

A meeting of the Campbell County Broadband Authority was held on the 4th day of June 2019 in the Multi-Use 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
A. Dale Moore	Altavista Election District

The member absent was:

Susan R. Hogg	Timberlake Election District
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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).

Approval of Minutes

On motion of Supervisor Hardie, it was resolved the Campbell County Broadband Authority approves the minutes of the April 2, 2019 meeting.

The vote was: Aye: Borland, Good, Gunter, Hardie, Moore, Watts

Nay: None

Absent: Hogg

Planned Presentation by SCS Broadband

A presentation by SCS Broadband was planned for this meeting to hear about their projects in neighboring localities. Unfortunately, staff was notified just prior to the meeting that there had been an emergency, and no one from SCS Broadband would be able to attend the meeting.

Define Broadband Authority Objective

Administrator Rogers commented this would be an opportunity for the Broadband Authority to define its objectives and discuss what a successful implementation of broadband would look like in Campbell County. At the April 2, 2019 meeting the Authority authorized staff to draft a Request for Proposals (RFP) for an incentive program for the private sector. This would invite the private sector to propose solutions which would place the Broadband Authority in a position to support and incentivize the expansion of broadband without taking ownership of the technology. Administrator Rogers asked the Authority to define its expectation of broadband expansion. Would the Authority only want to consider applications to expand broadband in unserved areas, underserved areas or a balanced approach?

Supervisor Hardie liked the idea of attacking underserved areas and in that process you could strengthen the ability to provide service to unserved areas. Strengthening the underserved areas in close proximity to the major transportation corridors, primary and secondary roads could increase the likelihood of business and residential development. He added there may be an unserved area where it would make sense to have a tower to help close the gap in an underserved area. It was hard to clarify that further without looking closely at a coverage map, but he would like to improve the quality of life for as many citizens as possible.

Supervisor Borland supported the goal to improve broadband coverage along major roadways where businesses were located. While he had Verizon DSL at his house and considered the speeds adequate, his neighbors may want better service in order to do more online. So, his area may be served, but could be considered underserved. This may be the case in many areas considered to have broadband coverage. There was also a concern about what would be considered affordable broadband. Supervisor Borland added the more we expanded broadband, the more it would help economic development.

Chairman Watts commented on the coverage maps that were wrong, and there was a general lack of coverage south of Route 24. He thought it was a good idea to provide incentives to the private sector to expand broadband wherever they could.

Supervisor Hardie agreed, but recognized a mixed solution may be needed such as the strategic placement of a tower in places where the private sector was not willing to invest. He regularly received complaints on the level of service currently provided, and he would be keeping those calls in mind when the County was considering an investment in a company.

Supervisor Gunter commented broadband was a necessity to attract more residential development as more people wanted the option to work from home. Supervisor Hardie agreed adding that people would move for better broadband service. Supervisor Borland suggested the RFP should request minimum standards for upload and download speeds. Administrator Rogers indicated staff was working on a scoring sheet that would rate the responses on whether if it was a new or expanded service, the distribution method, the unserved or underserved populations to be served including commercial addresses, speed of service with the highest points being given to 25/3 or higher upload/download speeds. Also included on the score sheet were pricing structures to look at the affordability of the service and sustainability of the project. Supervisor Borland suggested a survey to determine the need for broadband across the County.

There was additional discussion regarding the limitations of signal strength from towers, and the probability of needing a mixed solution to broadband that would include fiber and fixed wireless. Administrator Rogers indicated he met with River Street Wilkes Communication who received Connect America funding. They were attempting to work with electric cooperatives to run fiber through communities and a small portion of Campbell County would be included in its current grant award. Working through electric cooperatives would be a way to provide fiber to communities. River Street could provide a network design at an estimated cost of \$50,000 or the Authority could wait to see the proposals received from the RFP. Bedford County paid around \$60,000 for a network design to provide broadband coverage throughout the County.

Supervisor Hardie believed the Authority should proceed with the RFP to work with the private sector providers and see how the County might incentivize their ability to expand. If the private sector was not able or willing to expand, that may help answer questions such as how many towers may be needed in the County.

Administrator Rogers confirmed he would draft a narrative outlining the Authority's goals to increase broadband coverage along with the score sheet. The Authority would need to have a conversation on how to fund the incentives and how much funding should be allocated to the broadband project. Chuck Kirby with the Center for Innovative Technologies suggested the Authority wait on its RFP as they were working on an RFP template that could be used.

Supervisor Borland initiated a discussion of the fiber network that connected the Schools and the laws prohibiting the connection to that network because the project was funded by federal dollars. Would it be possible to contact our Congressman to determine what could be done to free up the dark fiber? Administrator Rogers had explored this in the past with no success, but it was time to probe that question again.

The RFP and funding for incentives would be discussed in more detail at the next meeting of the Authority. For the Authority's information, Chairman Watts and Supervisor Moore met with Delegate Byron recently to discuss the County's plans for broadband. She was very supportive of the County's endeavor and shared that going forward it may be difficult to obtain grants from the Tobacco Commission.

On motion of Supervisor Borland, the meeting was adjourned at 5:50 p.m.

CHARLIE A. WATTS II, CHAIRMAN

Approved: _____