

CAMPBELL COUNTY BROADBAND AUTHORITY

August 15, 2023

A meeting of the Campbell County Broadband Authority was held on the 15th day of August 2023 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
Kenneth R. Brown	Spring Hill Election District
Justin A. Carwile	Timberlake Election District
Matt W. Cline	Concord Election District
Jon R. Hardie	Rustburg Election District
A. Dale Moore	Altavista Election District
Steve W. Shockley (arrived 6:02 p.m.)	Sunburst Election District

Also present were:

Frank J. Rogers, County Administrator
Clifton M. Tweedy, Deputy County Administrator
Catherine H. Moore, Clerk
Paul Harvey, Director of Community Development

Chairman Watts called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. and welcomed everyone to a meeting of the Campbell County Broadband Authority (CCBA). Updates from the three broadband providers would be presented at this meeting.

// APPROVAL OF MINUTES

On motion of Supervisor Hardie, it was resolved the Campbell County Broadband Authority approves the minutes of the April 18, 2023 meeting.

The vote was: Aye: Brown, Carwile, Cline, Hardie, Moore, Watts
Nay: None
Absent: Shockley

Supervisor Shockley arrived at 6:02 p.m.

// RIVERSTREET

Rob Taylor, Director of Business Development and Government Relations, indicated that Riverstreet received VATI awards in 2022 and 2023 award and would be serving the southern portion of the County covering approximately 290 miles nearly 4,000 locations with a total project cost of more than \$24 million. Riverstreet received a little more than \$1.3 million from the Rural Development Opportunity Fund (RDOF), just over \$13 million in VATI funds, with the County's

portion just over \$3.4 million and Riverstreet's contribution a little more than \$7 million. This was a 17-County project for them.

Riverstreet is anticipating construction to begin in the 3rd quarter of 2023 and should start staking the project and applying for the required permits. Construction would be started in Campbell County from the Renan remote in Pittsylvania County and from the Phenix remote in Charlotte County. Additional remotes may be needed in Campbell County dependent on the range and the river crossing. Once that has been determined, the designs could be finalized and contracts could be submitted for bids. That was usually a 30-day process, and the actual construction time was generally 120 days. As sections were built, customers could be connected. Riverstreet would do a ground breaking ceremony in one of the areas, and they would make notifications to the citizens to let them know the services available.

// FIREFLY

Gary Wood, President and CEO of Firefly was present to provide updates on their project in the northern portion of the County. Accompanying him was Galen Creekmore, Key Accounts and Member Engagement Representative for Central Virginia Electric Cooperative. To date, Firefly has invested approximately \$1.1 million in Campbell County, and the current project would pass 430 locations with 58 miles of fiber. They currently had 40 electric accounts that already had fiber service. By the end of the VATI project, a total of \$3.9 million would be invested in Campbell County.

Mr. Wood reported that Appalachian Power had completed the make ready work. A letter was recently mailed to the citizens in the service area to introduce Firefly and the services available. Firefly would be hosting a Virtual Townhall on October 26th which were generally well received. In addition to word of mouth and media attention, the County would also share information on its platforms to reach the citizens as well.

Fiber construction should begin in the next two to three weeks, and citizens would be seeing overhead and underground crews across the service area. They had four Route 460 crossings that would require additional approvals from VDOT. VDOT may require them to handle those crossings at night. There were also three railroad crossings for which they already had permits; however, it may take additional time for the railroad to flag the crossings. Fortunately, the railroad crossings were on the southern portion of the project and most of the citizens could be connected. Fiber construction was estimated to be completed within eight (8) weeks dependent on the completion of the Route 460 crossings. Once completed, splicing would take an additional four (4) weeks. Final fiber extensions and connections should be in the November 2023 – January 2024 timeframe.

In conclusion, Mr. Wood provided a chart outlining their residential and business costs for telephone and internet services adding the normal connection fee of \$100 would be waived. In addition, they could provide service 2,500 feet from the road at no charge, but would go any distance at no charge for low to moderate income customers. Mr. Wood predicts a number of residents would sign up before the project was completed.

// BRIGHTSPEED

Administrator Rogers advised that Brightspeed has until December of 2024 to complete the portion of the County awarded to them. If the event they do not, this area would become part of Firefly's project. Brightspeed was invited to attend this meeting, and they agreed to come. But since that time, the point of contact retired, and staff would reach out to the new point of contact.

// SHENTEL

Jessica Wilmer of Shentel indicated their broadband services in Virginia were known as Shentel Fiber. For this project, Shentel would be extending their current cable plant service and bringing in new fiber. In other areas, their fiber service was known as Glo Fiber. The project would be a hybrid solution with a mix of fiber and coax to extend service to 3,500 homes and businesses. The project would cost approximately \$19 million, and a portion of that would be funded through the State's VATI grant.

The agreements for this project were signed in September of 2022, and the project was to be completed in September 2024. As indicated at the last update, 20% of their build would be buried, 70% would be aerial and 10% would be overlap. The Network Engineering cabinets were completed for Rustburg and Concord. The Altavista and Gladys cabinets were pending.

There has been a delay in the completion of the make-ready work by AEP. When they submitted a permit, it was generally in a package of 50 poles. When AEP receives the permit, they inspect every pole and its attachments and estimate the costs. With 70% of their build being aerial, this has created a delay in moving forward. Some of the permits were held by Southside Electric. Due to their high costs, they have had to do some redesigning to work around their poles. Some of this has required using buried lines instead of aerial. As soon as the make-ready work was completed, they would be able to move forward with construction. The tentative construction start for the Concord area was the 4th quarter of 2023. The Gladys and Altavista areas should be released in the 2nd quarter of 2024 with the Rustburg area being released in the 2nd quarter of 2024. They do not plan to request an extension as of yet. In addition to the make ready delays, Ms. Wilmer indicated there have been some delays due to the quality of utility locate accuracy which has caused some damage to existing utilities. They do their best to locate public or private utilities before doing any work in a new area.

The test areas that were built last fall along Arrington Drive and Two Bid Road were released to customers in March. They passed about 60 homes and have had 35 customers request service. To address the required VATI Communication Plan, Shentel would provide several mailers to qualifying addresses during the pre-construction and construction phases.

// DISCUSSION AND QUESTIONS

In answer to a question by Supervisor Shockley as to the reliability of service of underground versus overhead, Ms. Wilmer indicated that underground was better subject to being accidentally cut. As far as construction time and costs, it was faster and cheaper to build overhead. Supervisor Shockley asked what they thought of the future of overhead utilities versus

underground utilities. Mr. Wood interjected that overhead electricity would not be going away, especially in rural areas, because of the enormous costs to build underground. Ms. Wilmer agreed indicating they have had crews in some areas for months blasting through rock to build an underground line. Mr. Wood added they had been installing fiber since 2018 and it had been extremely reliable.

Supervisor Cline asked if there was any progress on receiving a list of the addresses by the providers. Mr. Taylor indicated a list of addresses was required for the VATI applications. He added that as soon as they start construction, an interactive map would be included on their website whereby you could search a specific address. Administrator Rogers added that as soon as the final engineering was complete, those addresses could be shared. As of tonight's update, the addresses in Firefly and Riverstreet's areas were ready for distribution. The Shentel area had not yet been finalized.

Supervisor Shockley questioned how new home construction would be treated under the VATI contract. Mr. Taylor indicated that part of calculating the number of locations passed, potential locations were factored in. If they pass a new home, they would go back to serve that home as that would reduce their costs.

Administrator Rogers advised that Lumos was installing fiber in the Timberlake/Wildwood/Cornerstone areas of the County. Their project should be completed by the 1st quarter of 2024. They were working independent of the County projects. An invitation has been extended to them to attend a future meeting of the Broadband Authority.

// ADJOURNMENT

On motion of Supervisor Cline, the meeting was adjourned at 7:09 p.m.

The vote was: Aye: Brown, Carwile, Cline, Hardie, Moore, Shockley, Watts
Nay: None
Absent: None

CHARLIE A. WATTS II, CHAIRMAN

Approved: October 17, 2023