

Rappahannock Broadband Committee

Minutes of March 30, 2017 Meeting

John Lesinski called meeting to order at 4:33 pm.

In attendance were: John Lesinski, Todd Summers, Alan Zuschlag and Bill Dant (via Skype).

Minutes of previous meeting submitted for approval and accepted.

The first item on the agenda was an overview of the CIT presentation at our last meeting given by John Lesinski, followed by a discussion of CIT's recent request for more information. CIT requested an inventory of current public internet assets in the County. The committee decided to assign the information gathering among the committee members as follows:

Local Government: John and Casey (in coordination with Debbie Keyser)

Public Safety: Todd (in coordination with Richie Burke)

Health Care: John

Library: Alan

Schools: Bill and Casey

Community Centers: Ted (this could be the senior center, the recreation center, etc.)

Other: Mike

Since this information will be easy to gather, it was decided that all such information should be sent by the assigned committee members to the committee chair no later than April 15th so that it could be tabulated and reviewed prior to our next meeting (April 18th).

There followed discussion of the various "Vertical Assets" inventory requested by CIT. These include the existing cell towers, emergency and county owned communication systems, water towers, etc that could be incorporated in a broadband plan to provide access points for future broadband delivery. It was decided that John Lesinski, Todd Summers and Alan Zuschlag should catalog these assets in cooperation with Richie Burke's office to complete the inventory by April 15th.

A final topic of the CIT request for information was the CIT survey that will be sent to all Rappahannock citizens. The committee members (and several members of the public) found the sample survey to be extremely basic and potentially not well received by the local populace. There seemed to be a good deal missing from the survey and a final broad-based "other comments" section at the end that would be difficult to tabulate in a coherent manner. It was agreed that we would contact CIT for more information on how this survey might be expended/amended to include more useful information about current service availability and what that service was in terms of speed, bandwidth, etc, and allow survey respondents to comment more on their level of satisfaction of current service in terms of cost,

speed, and amount. It was also felt that the “business” section of the sample survey was also inadequate in assessing local business needs.

The next item agenda was an update on the Sperryville Tower situation by Todd Summers. Todd and John met with Richie Burke to discuss the possibility of broadband placement on this EMS tower. Their takeaway was that that option was entirely possible, but for funding purposes and the current timeline a tower location had to be determined immediately. This location could be a ‘placeholder’ location and could be moved at a later date if necessary to incorporate additional uses, but for the moment the EMS usage would remain paramount in determining tower location. There are also several other structural issues that are requirements for the EMS tower and public safety concerns that may not make it as desirable for broadband use, so that we should not count on this tower for future broadband service provision, but rather look at it as a potential ‘bonus’ node in any future system. This is especially the case since it is unclear whether commercial use on a public safety system might have some zoning implications.

There was additional discussion of the Washington communications tower and the options it has for increased communications capacity. Right now there is a T-1 line to the tower. Fiber could be added to this tower, but also a microwave array. Micro-wave would be cheaper on one hand, but reinforcing the tower structurally to handle the microwave array may actually make the fiber option cheaper. If so, that fiber could be potentially available for broadband use as well. Todd will monitor this situation.

Other updates included:

- Alan asked if broadband could be incorporated into the upcoming revision of the County’s Comprehensive Plan. John said he would check with CIT to see if they had some appropriate language from other counties that we might propose incorporating in our plan.
- John noted that Rappahannock County has not signed up for the Public Private Partnership Agreement (PPPA) that other localities have in place. We would need such an agreement on the books before we could embark on any such partnership in the future. John will address this at the next Board of Supervisors meeting.
- Todd Summer brought up the new AT&T contract with government first responders. This was highlighted in a recent Washington Post article and Todd thought that there may be resources available or potential infrastructure that we may be able to tap into. He suggested that CIT be queried as to their take on this. More info at firstnet.gov
- David Shaefer, Rappahannock County Librarian gave an overview of the Library’s internet resources, which are limited. Contrary to what several committee members had assumed, the library does not have a very robust internet system. It does offer free WiFi to their patrons but it is a basic Comcast business account which is no different than that available to local businesses in the Town of Washington. It does slow down a bit when there are a lot of patrons using the system. They would like a more robust internet option, but there are none available at the moment. Therefore the library is not likely to be a major ‘node’ in a hybrid system (fiber/WISP) or any sort of public resource to expand coverage. However, the library could offer a lot more to its patrons if it had the capacity to offer more of its services on the web, and had teleconferencing capability for lectures, remote learning, etc.

New Business consisted of discussion of next meeting date and the potential of having an evening meeting to allow those residents with day jobs or school with a chance to attend a meeting. It was therefore decided that our next meeting would be held at 7:30 pm on April 18, 2017 in the Jamison Room of the Library.

Meeting adjourned at 5:45 pm.