

AT A REGULAR MEETING OF THE RAPPAHANNOCK COUNTY BROADBAND AUTHORITY HELD ON MONDAY, MAY 17, 2021, AT 5:30 P.M. AT THE RAPPAHANNOCK COUNTY COURTHOUSE, 250 GAY STREET, WASHINGTON, VIRGINIA.

CALL TO ORDER

Acting Chair Donehey called the meeting to order at 5:35 P.M.

Authority Board Members present: Debbie P. Donehey; Christine Smith; I. Christopher Parrish. Members Keir A. Whitson and Ronald L. Frazier attended the meeting via Zoom connection

Others present: Garrey W. Curry, Jr., FOIA Officer¹; Margaret Bond, Secretary.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Ms. Donehey led attendees in the Pledge of Allegiance.

MOMENT OF SILENCE

Ms. Donehey requested that attendees observe a moment of silence.

ADOPTION OF AGENDA

Ms. Smith moved to adopt the amended agenda and Mr. Parrish seconded the motion. The motion carried by unanimous vote.

Aye: Donehey, Parrish, Smith, Whitson, Frazier.

Nay:

Abstain:

ADOPTION OF MINUTES

Minutes of the February 15, March 15, and April 26, 2021 Authority Board Meeting were presented for review. Ms. Donehey noted a correction of the name “Kullers” to “Cullers” on page 4, and “Venison” to “Verizon” on page 9 of the minutes of April 26th. Ms. Smith corrected the name ‘Coffee’ to “Coffey” in the February 15². Ms. Smith moved to adopt the above three

¹ Mr. Curry is also Rappahannock County Administrator.

² These corrections to the Authority Board meeting minutes were subsequently accomplished for meeting minutes February, March, and April 2021. The minutes posted on BoardDocs reflect these changes.

sets of Authority Board Meeting minutes as amended with these changes. Mr. Parrish seconded the motion. The motion carried by unanimous vote.

Aye: Donehey, Parrish, Smith, Frazier, Whitson.

Nay:

Abstain:

PUBLIC COMMENT

Mark Anderson, Piedmont District, offered three comments: (1) RE: VATI application requirements – Mr. Anderson said it appears the County does not have some of the information the application calls for. It appears that the County will have to get down to mapping the extent of broadband coverage to each of the 4,200 houses and businesses. Don't think the County has this level of detail yet, but possibly DHCD³ has some of this information from their secondary sources. (2) Mr. Anderson said that to complete a VATI application and win, the County needs to have an engineering level design plan in advance of starting or simultaneously to fill out the VATI application.

Mr. Anderson suggested the County consider bringing in someone outside the County to provide this service. He reminded the Authority Board that the Virginia Association of County speaker at the April meeting said there was money available from State economic development funds specifically to fund this type of effort. (3) Mr. Anderson described his favorite “bug bear” for the County which was lack of GIS⁴ mapping. He pointed out that the VATI application required submission of several types of polygon shapefiles⁵. He thought it would be difficult to fill out the application without the information provided by GIS mapping.

Mr. Anderson concluded with comments on the recently announced American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) which calls for projects to achieve to deliver or scalable to achieve symmetrical upload and download speeds of 100 Mbps. He pointed out the County had been struggling with a way to achieve 25/3 Mbps download/upload speeds and that the ARPA rule requiring the higher speeds was “daffy” for the situation the County is currently in.

Kirby Thornton, Stonewall-Hawthorne District. Referencing comments from two Broadband Authority meetings ago, he thanked the Chair for stating that the County may have to shoot for something less than 25/3 in order to reach a large number of people in the County. Mr. Thornton said he would love to have a gigabit of bandwidth to his house, but we have to get something for everyone in the County who needed it, “even if it is not gold-plated”.

³ Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development

⁴ Geographic Information System mapping – a framework for gathering, managing, and analyzing data.

⁵ The shapefile format is a geospatial vector data format for geographic information system software.

[Unidentified individual under Zoom account name “Ellen Chamberlain”] asked how funding works for broadband projects and if the County had a broadband project going on that was being held up by Rappahannock Electric? Ms. Donehey said the County did not have an answer at the moment but indicated some of the speakers scheduled to speak later in the meeting might have the answer.

With no further individuals indicating their desire to address the Authority Board, Chair Donehey closed the Public Comment session.

PRESENTATIONS

Department of Housing and Community Development

Chair Donehey introduced Lonnie Hamilton III from the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development. She indicated DHCD Director Tamarah Holmes had assigned Mr. Hamilton to work with the County to assist with developing a VATI grant application.

Mr. Hamilton said his job is to help counties with the early stages of broadband deployment development. He said he also had some GIS mapping resources which he could contribute to Rappahannock County in planning its broadband system and applying for a VATI grant. Mr. Hamilton talked about three areas of information: (1) What he can do? (2) What the County can do? and (3) What are the next steps. Mr. Hamilton explained to the Authority Board that his primary work was in what he called “early stages” of broadband planning.

Mr. Hamilton outlined several areas of what the County can do toward completing the VATI process, such as: identify all unserved⁶ areas in the County; talk to potential internet service providers about potential partnership with the County; inventory County resources, both in-kind and financial; publish a request for information regarding a VATI application partnership, including critical criteria. According to Mr. Hamilton as the County begins to combine this information accumulated on a county-wide basis into potential project areas, project details such as areas where fiber optic service in the county makes sense and where WISPs or a hybrid of the two is a better choice will become apparent. He also encouraged the Authority Board members, in considering how to implement universal broadband development to think about approving a network design in phases over a period of years and with one or more partners -- if one project would not provide coverage for the whole County. He reminded the Authority Board that Governor Northam’s goal was universal coverage, which he claimed was 95% broadband service coverage.

⁶ For purposes of applying for a VATI grant, “unserved areas” are those in which residents experience less than 25/3 Mbps broadband service. See 2022 Virginia Telecommunication Initiative Program Guidelines and Criteria, Eric C. Johnston and Tamarah Holmes.

As for next steps, Mr. Hamilton talked first about compiling the data obtained including relevant GIS information for the county, local school system information on gaps in coverage and affordability of service, and other information on gaps in overall service throughout. He also suggested the County survey and document what it can invest such as in-kind assistance, such as waiver of permit fees, monetary support and manpower, such as someone to help write up the VATI application. He reminded the Authority Board that they could form up a service district to obtain taxes for broadband development, if necessary.

In the question and answer session following Mr. Hamilton's presentation, Mr. Parrish asked him if the County could achieve what it needed to, to apply for a VATI grant without using GIS mapping. He said GIS mapping service is expensive to set up and requires an annual fee to maintain. He also explained his belief that not having GIS information available to the public saved the County from developers coming in and keeps the County unique. Mr. Hamilton said applying for a VATI grant without the County's GIS mapping information would be difficult and that putting together the application's shapefiles would have to come from GIS information. He said that DHCD could assist with obtaining some of the GIS information needed for the grant application.

Vice Chair Smith asked about identifying potential partners and underserved areas and wanted to know of DHCD could help with this information. Mr. Hamilton said he could also assist in these areas and help find appropriate contacts. Chair Donehey asked how many VATI applications Mr. Hamilton had gone through, to which he said Rappahannock County's application would be the first one he had assisted from beginning to end.

Chair Donehey was also concerned with assessing how much of the VATI application process is done by the County and how much by the ISP partner(s)? Mr. Hamilton said some questions localities can't answer such as ones requiring very technical answers such as relating to network design and so forth. Some answers, he said are split responsibilities between the County and the private partner.

FOIA Officer Curry told the Authority Board that his experience in the first round of applications in which he was involved was that it was a completely joint process with both sides passing information back and forth.

Chair Donehey wanted to know if there some sort of project management timeline for how to accomplish all that is needed for the grant application in the seven weeks between when the Notice of Intent to Apply is filed and the application is due.

Mr. Hamilton replied that there are certain critical path items without which you cannot complete the application, such as finding a willing partner for the time cycle. He said that would be the

County's number one question to answer. The next question would be if the County were going to swing through this cycle for a true, comprehensive county-wide plan or try next cycle for a smaller area.

Mr. Hamilton explained there is no specific timeline for developing the application process. Some counties he knew of started discussing the application process months ago and are now getting ready to compile the necessary data. There is a spectrum of methods to accomplish this work, he said. Really, Mr. Hamilton concluded, the timeline starts now.

Mr. Frazier said he was not sure how the County was going to make the timeline for an application due date September 14th. He said the Board needed to identify somebody to take responsibility for directing this process and make that happen.

Shentel

The next presentation was from Shentel principals: Stuart French⁷, Bryan Byrd, and Dan Meenan⁸.

Mr. French – Shentel is a 118-year old publicly-traded company historically delivering broadband, CATV, phone, and wireless service to rural markets (sic). It is based out of Edinburg, Virginia. Their wireless service is through an affiliate agreement with Sprint. Sprint has merged with T-Mobile, but there is a provision in that merger agreement that would allow this relationship to be terminated. The merger represents a nearly \$2 billion asset purchase with a large portion of that profit going back into capital investment. Right now, Shentel has over 1,000 employees and is operating at a profit.

Mr. French indicated Shentel is capable of providing broadband services to rural areas, such as Rappahannock County, without any monetary contribution by the County. "But obviously," he said, "any contribution (from the County) would help."

Shentel is in process of building up its broadband business. It offers three programs of broadband service:

(1) Glofiber, which is fiber optic wire to the home at multi-gig symmetrical speeds. This service is only available to towns, cities, or dense residential clusters in rural areas. Shentel is targeting formerly monopolistic areas of service which now have only one provider, such as Comcast or Verizon service.

⁷ Stuart French and Bryan Byrd are Government and Community Affairs specialists for Shentel.

⁸ Dan Meenan is Vice President for Engineering and Construction at Shentel.

(2) Beam, which is a fixed wireless system for unserved and underserved rural areas. It has only been operating since the 4th quarter of 2020 and leverages exclusively-licensed, mid-band spectrum for rural areas. Shentel sees the future of this service to largely unserved homes. The Beam service offers three levels of speeds 25 Mbps, 50 Mbps, and 100 Mbps. It includes voice over internet protocol capabilities. Beam relies on building out multiple cell tower sites of both micro- and macro-cell towers to deliver this service, particularly to rural areas where the home density per square mile is low and it is more economic for Shentel to build out this multiple tower system than other systems.

(3) The final service Shentel is marketing is Triple Play which consists of bundling internet, video, and phone service at speeds up to 1 gigabyte through historical cable networks. Current this system operating in West Virginia, Pennsylvania, Maryland and Virginia, notably, Front Royal and Winchester.

Mr. French said Shentel was thinking that the VATI program is one of the hottest topics with counties like Rappahannock. Shentel acknowledged that it had already been talking through what the County has been considering and that Shentel has a history with the VATI applications.

Mr. Byrd – There has been a tremendous growth and focus on broadband, particularly in the last year. Shentel has been involved in a lot of grant in its (unintelligible) experience. This has included both VATI and CARES Act funding. Shentel, as a single company, has a multi-technology capability, e.g. it has a robust hybrid network, and has brought a lot of fiber to the home, but fiber is expensive and not a solution for everyone. According to Mr. Byrd, rather than mixing and matching different companies with different technologies, Shentel can offer a lot synergies and efficiencies out of pushing a fiber network as far as possible and finishing the network service with fixed wireless on top of that.

Mr. Byrd pointed out that for an area to be eligible for VATI grant its broadband service has to “unserved” which is below 25/3 Mbps download/upload speeds. In order to get a VATI application out it will be necessary to identify and demonstrate (sic) all the areas that meet this definition of “unserved”. According to Mr. Byrd, one advantage of partnering with Rappahannock County is that Shentel can help identify all the areas which are unserved which would be prime candidates for VATI funding and where there are the hot spots and sore spots (sic) of service.

Another area which Shentel is currently working on is what a high level initial network design would look like. Shentel has a lot of pieces it is trying to put together. It has an RDOF application, a fiber network, and a fixed wireless network. The company has to look at where it is building as part of the RDOF effort, what additional fiber is going to be laid, how it can leverage this (construction), where its existing fiber structure is, and such questions as are there

unserved homes near that fiber, and where there are pockets where it would make most sense to install fixed wireless. Shentel is in the process of trying to reconcile all these parts and pieces in the RDOF area it has identified for Rappahannock County.

Mr. Byrd reiterated that September 14, 2021 is the VATI application deadline, which is the only firm date that has to be hit. Before that there needs to be a notice of application filed by July 27 in order to be able to submit the final application.

Dan Meenan – Shentel participated in the Rural Digital Opportunity Fund auction conducted by the Federal Communications Commission in November 2020. Shentel was awarded funding for broadband for 895 homes in southeast corner of Rappahannock County. Based on preliminary engineering, it will require approximately 12 cell towers to provide Beam broadband service to this area. Shentel estimates a total cost for this installation of \$1.2 million, which works out to be \$1,298 per home to provide service to these homes. The RDOF subsidy will provide approximately 66% of that initial capital cost. That subsidy is paid in equal annual disbursements over a ten-year period. So, the federal government will pay Shentel \$71,000 per year to offset its installation and construction costs for this system.

Mr. Meenan presented a map of the region, including Rappahannock County, showing the location of 12 cell towers in southeastern part of the County where it anticipates constructing its Beam fixed wireless network. A copy of this map appears at the end of these minutes. Mr. Meenan pointed out another Shentel RDOF award area in northwestern Madison County which it also intends to build a wireless network. Because these areas are close geographically, Shentel is looking at these projects as one. SpaceX also awarded RDOF funding for Rappahannock County.

According to Mr. Meenan, as part of the RDOF award, Shentel was required to submit to the FCC an engineering analysis of how it would provide broadband to those 895 homes. The plan Shentel engineers put together shows between 11 and 13 cell tower sites in the southeastern corner of the County that are needed to provide Beam broadband service.

Mr. Meenan informed the Broadband Authority members that Shentel submitted the FCC Long Form application in February 2021 after it won the auction. The referenced map was a part of this application. The FCC and Shentel know that these locations will change. Shentel then sat down with the FCC, virtually, and reviewed and discussed the application. Shentel will probably meet again in the third quarter of 2021 to get through the Long Form process and get approval by the first quarter of 2022. If that happens, Shentel will start cell site development for the 11- 13 cell towers in 2022, if not earlier. RDOF rules require the company to have a buildout schedule that accomplishes 40% deployment by the end of the third year, or 358 homes,

60% by the end of year four, 80% by end of year five, or 716 homes. The final 100% completion of 895 homes would be completed by the end of year six.

Mr. Meenan then described what he called “variables” affecting the above deployment schedule. The preliminary design shows cell site selection. He said he expected all these identified locations to change as Shentel goes through the land use process after it completes the FCC Long Form application. Then Shentel will say, “Hey, are there any towers that existed prior to us doing our preliminary design?” If so, as Mr. Meenan described, Shentel will try and make use of those towers, rather than building new ones. Other questions Shentel will consider are: Should it consider using small towers versus tall towers?

[Mr. Meenan then defined “small towers” as 100 foot towers. “Tall towers”, according to Shentel are 200-300 foot towers.]

Shentel, according to Mr. Meenan, would also have to canvas property owners for their interest in putting up small and large cell towers, consider the County’s zoning implications, and construction costs.

Next, Mr. Meenan explained, Shentel would have to think about how to connect every one of these cell towers “back to their switch” to provide broadband service. This connection would typically be accomplished with fiber. Where there are gaps in fiber availability, Shentel would use microwave connections.

Mr. Meenan then discussed what Shentel sees as opportunities for this extensive cell tower fixed wireless system. One of the first opportunities he discussed was the addition of many new cell towers in the County that residents did not initially contemplate. New towers in adjacent counties may also provide some level of service to Rappahannock County. Most importantly, Shentel referenced the Rappahannock Electric Cooperative “middle mile” fiber network which would give Shentel the opportunity to consider a partnership with REC to bring fiber to all of these cell tower sites to support the Beam network system.

Mr. Meenan disclosed that Shentel has had some very good discussions with REC. It has a non-disclosure agreement in place so Shentel engineers can share information with REC engineers about fiber lines. “At this point in the dance,” said Mr. Meenan, “I think there are some real possibilities.”

Mr. Byrd summarized: Shentel is very committed to staying on its investment in Rappahannock County. It wants to continue its discussion with the County about what are its broadband needs outside the RDOF area and how best Shentel can partner with the County to do this together, including developing an engineering analysis to figure out how best utilize the funding methods

(sic) available. Shentel wants to explore how it can get fiber to other parts of the County or if it can just add additional fixed wireless areas relying on building out its extensive tower construction to its network. Shentel reiterated it is committed to partnering with the County in the VATI application with the first milestone being the July 27 at which time Shentel will formally announce that it is partnering with the County to pursue an (VATI) application. Seven weeks later Shentel will formalize that application with VATI.

A Question and Answer period ensued:

Chair Donehey – The tower conversation gets eyes wide open. The County’s Comprehensive Plan references 80-foot towers. The Planning Commission is now looking at our zoning to see what they need to do to, to change -- to make the towers more likely for Shentel to come in and do the installations. Is an 80 foot tower going to be tall enough?

Mr. Meenan – 80 foot towers can work only in some locations. In other locations 100 foot towers will not be enough (height). It all depends on ground elevation. He explained that Shentel has not yet spent time determining these heights and locations because it has not yet gone out and pieced together a network that will cover the whole area.

Vice Chair Smith – Asked about the general costs of the Beam service.

Mr. Meenan – Shentel pricing would charge \$60 per month for 25/3 Mbps service, including two in-home wi-fi routers and unlimited data. The 50/5 service would be \$80 per month with two routers, and the 100/7 service would be \$160 per month. The installation fee is currently priced at \$99.

Mr. Frazier – Wanted to know if there was a term limit on the service contract? Mr. Meenan said there would be no contract term limits.

Chair Donehey – Inquired about Shentel’s response to meeting the (FCC) deadlines outlined in light of difficulties businesses are experiencing with getting parts and supplies?

Mr. Meenan – Shentel has money in the bank. It purchased much of its supplies in advance of the current price increases. Some of Shentel’s costs will go up, but he saw this occurrence as a “blip” and then costs will come down. Shentel has enough supplies at present, but doesn’t have all the engineers it needs to respond to all the requests from rural counties for service.

FOIA Officer Curry – Wondered if Shentel spent any time looking at the information which was recently released regarding the American Reinvestment Plan (ARP) requirement of 100/20 Mbps

download/upload speeds? Mr. Curry viewed these criteria as a barrier to the Board for the cash it was going to be coming into.

Mr. Meenan – We did look at it, and as one of the previous speakers said, this requirement is “daffy.” There are some areas where these speeds are impossible to reach. Either the ARP requirements are going to have to be amended, or (achieving) these speeds is going to be a challenge. He said he expected to change the current ARP requirements, the County would have to disprove its ability to provide service that meets these speeds.

Mr. Byrd – It would be possible to achieve the speeds required by ARP through fiber optic system. Some of the ARP money could go to expanding fiber optic system. Shentel hopes there will be a “carve out” added to the ARP requirements where fixed wireless would be a viable solution option.

Mr. Whitson – Shentel glossed over appearance of Starlink as internet service provider. There are a fair number of homes in Rappahannock County that have installed Starlink service. In view of how the hard look the Board of Supervisors gives to any towers, do you view Starlink as competition? In an ideal world we would not like to have any towers (in the County). Should the County hit the “pause button” to see if it can provide broadband service without ruining the Rappahannock County landscape with even 80-100 foot towers?

Mr. Whitson continued by pointing out that Shentel’s estimate of serving 900 homes in the County, represents approximately a quarter of the County’s population. He called it an “unsettling proposition” that (under Shentel’s plan) a quarter of the County would be covered with 10-13 cell towers.

Mr. Meenan – Starlink hasn’t commercially launched. Shentel’s business model competes very well with legacy services such as Excel and with other fixed wireless providers and satellite providers. Shentel’s fixed wireless model cannot compete with fiber to the home. VATI does not consider areas served by Starlink to be “served” for purposes of its application.

Mr. Hamilton – The Department of Housing and Community Development excludes satellite service from its application criteria as “served”. It might be years before we know if Starlink is viable. (If it proves successful) VATI might be open to changing its guidelines to consider satellite ISPs.

FOIA Officer Curry – The County has a few cell providers that provide home internet service. T-Mobile is one that very nicely just gave Shentel a bunch of money. Their deployment on the Sperryville tower is very, very fast. They are now marketing this home service. Mr. Curry

wanted to know: Are (these deployments) competition to Shentel? Will these speeds also slow down over time.?

Mr. Meenan – I have managed wireless internet systems for over 20 years. We have surplus spectrum that wireless systems can use. Speeds are blazing right now because there are not a lot of customers. Once they complete their acquisitions and have a real viable network, Mr. Meenan speculated that these blazing speeds would slow down.

Mr. Curry – remarked that, as Shentel had identified itself as a willing partner (with the County) for a VATI application, how did it envision going forward?

Mr. French – Shentel is working on a network design. Shentel is hoping to have a model prepared in the next week or two. After this design is completed, Shentel would have recurring meetings with County officials every few weeks or every week as the deadline approaches. Shentel is also planning on meeting regularly with DHCD staff, particularly Mr. Hamilton. Mr. French suggested the RBBA start scheduling regular meetings with Shentel as soon as it completed its network design.

Mr. Curry – Disclaiming any claim of authority to speak for the Authority Board or the Board of Supervisors -- If the County is trying to leverage Shentel's RDOF service area, he said he would be interested in seeing a Whole-of-County approach to insuring the County follows through with a universal broadband plan.

Vice Chair Smith – Are there any other counties that Shentel has partnered with that we could read their application and see what sort of approach Shentel took?

Mr. Byrd - Last year Shentel partnered with Campbell, Bedford, and Franklin counties for VATI applications. However, none of these VATI applications was successful.

Mr. Frazier – Inquired if Shentel's RDOF monies were focused exclusively on the 895 homes in the southeastern part of Rappahannock County, and if the County wanted to cover the rest of the residents, then would it have to rely on some other sort of funding like VATI or ARP or County funds?

Mr. Byrd – Yes. RDOF funds available for these 895 homes.

Mr. Curry – If you bring enough other resources to the County (e.g. CARES Act cash, RDOF, VATI) then Shentel can bring a commercial aspect to the table and have a business that is viable.

Mr. Frazier – If we are looking at 11 or 12 towers for two-fifths of the County, what would that build out plan look like for the rest of the County?

Mr. Curry – I guess we are going to find that out.

Mr. Byrd - RDOF money can be leveraged for the VATI grant. If the RDOF monies can be show to speed up implementation of some aspect of the VATI plan, then RDOF can be included in the VATI application.

Rappahannock County Schools

Chair Donehey thanked the Shentel presenters and introduced the next presentation by Dr. Robin Bolt from Rappahannock County Schools. Chair Donehey said Dr. Bolt has been doing a lot on subsidizing for Rappahannock School children and families.

Dr. Bolt said she had pulled together a number of funding sources. She referenced E-Rate established the Emergency Connectivity fund which released over \$7 billion to go to schools and libraries. It works much like the bidding process for E-Rate. Amounts received are based on the aggregate of students that receive our free or reduced lunch. For Rappahannock County this number is approximately 75%. Under this program, every student that does not have internet connectivity, we can build out to them through this funding. She commented that participation in this program was an historic “first” for the County.

[A bubble diagram of Emergency Connectivity Fund and E-rate funding sources, prepared by Dr. Bolt, appears at the end of these minutes.]

Dr. Bolt said she had been discussing this program with Amanda Weekly, Director of the Rappahannock County Library. The only requirement for the Library is that the students have to be a patron. So, if the students have a library card, they are a patron. This program would cover resident families and students that do not have internet access. Dr. Bolt said she would work with Amanda Weekly to fill out the grant application which opens up in June.

Mr. Curry – Governor Northam has just put out a press release that he wants to move up the 10-year plan to achieve universal broadband coverage in the state to 18 months. We do not know the full amount of how much money will be applied to this effort. Social Services has some subsidy monies for internet.

Dr. Bolt clarified that the amount from this source was \$50 per month for eligible families. She also informed the Authority Board that her program has also received monies for hot spots in the County, but they are not reliable.

Chair Donehey requested Dr. Bolt keep the Authority Board apprised of her progress on securing these funding sources.

REGULAR AGENDA ITEMS

Potential Broadband Funding

FOIA Officer Curry – The Authority Board is going to have to identify investment opportunities and figure out what level of investment is required and then ask the Board of Supervisors what level of investment is appropriate and then how to slice up the pie. According to Mr. Curry the County was going to have to determine if it can meet the ARP’s 100/100 Mbps requirement or if these requirements will they change.

In this light, Mr. Curry suggested, the Authority Board may want to keep pushing fiber-to-the-home and take as long as it takes. He also pointed out that the ARP \$1.4 million, all or half that lands in the County bank, will have to be spent in three years.

Chair Donehey asked Mr. Curry to reach out to other counties to ask how they are reacting to the 100/100 requirement. Mr. Curry explained that this requirement was an “interim final rule”.

Mr. Curry speculated that Mr. (Evan) Feinman may be the better contact to lead the state in a push back on the legislation side. Ultimately, the County would love to have 100Mbps up and 100Mbps down. Those speeds, he pointed out, would future proof broadband service.

Vice Chair Smith asked if the Authority Board were going to send these letters. Chair Donehey suggested a letter to Mr. Feinman requesting clarification. Ms. Smith requested a letter to Mr. Feinman saying the 100 up and 100 down is prohibitive. Mr. Curry explained that these speeds practically speaking were for deployment of a fiber optic internet system.

Mr. Curry then raised the issue of the Authority Board’s issuance of a request for information for any other internet service provider that might want to partner with the County for a VATI grant. He pointed out that the Authority Board has a willing partner with Shentel. But, he said, there might be another interested party out there that might want to respond, even knowing that Shentel has its RDOF \$750,000 in its pocket which it has to spend that money in southeastern Rappahannock County. Obviously, no ISP would compete with Shentel for this area, but there might be another ISP that would want to cover a different part of the County.

We have a lot of data from the schools, he said. It might be possible, with a lot of non-disclosure agreements, to share some of these data with providers.

The Authority Board engaged in discussion of how to draft, approve, and publish an RFI to coordinate with the deadlines imposed by the VATI application process. Chair Donehey was concerned that issuing an RFI would be a slap in the face of Shentel, but Vice Chair Smith pointed out that if the Board were considering spending taxpayers' dollars then it needed to be thorough a background as we can.

Todd Summers -- member of the public in attendance- - You have a set of qualifications and capacities on the table from Shentel. The Board can put out an RFI asking if anyone can “match or beat these” kind of a notice quickly. Experience writing grant applications, existing customer base, existing options for different kinds of modalities – fiber, wireless. You could say, “Here’s what Shentel’s got. Can you come close or beat this?”

Mr. Frazier – We should do an RFI because we are looking at covering other parts of the County. We have a hodge-podge of ISPs. We have areas that are not served and areas that are built out over each other. Maybe a subcommittee of the Authority could get to work for this.

Following additional discussion on how to write an RFI, and who should do it, and what it should say, and when it should be prepared, and if there were templates on such documents from other counties or DHCD, which could be consulted, Chairman Donehey volunteered to take the lead on organizing a group to write the RFI to be ready to launch by June 21.

Ultimately, Mr. Curry said he could write the RFI. He also pointed out that the Authority would have to figure out how to approve the RFI, how to evaluate responses received, what to do if there were requests for clarification--and other processes associated with administering an RFI.

Broadband Mission Statement and Broadband Vision Statement

Vice Chair Smith – Orange County posted its vision statement on the county website. Ms. Smith noted, this vision statement is very broad. It calls for “a rural community where everyone has access to next generation broadband, bringing broadband service to our community one connection at a time while enhancing overall quality of life and fostering economic development”. Vice Chair Smith questioned why Rappahannock County’s mission statement was much more focused and specific than the Orange County vision statement. She suggested the Authority Board could change “fostering economic development” to “preserving our rural landscape and change our objective to “reducing capital costs to private sector providers to provide next generation in unserved and underserved areas of our rural community”.

Vice Chair Smith pointed out that the Comprehensive Plan already includes very specific language guiding the mission of broadband development in the County. She wondered why the Broadband Authority couldn’t just have some nice language as a vision statement for that organization. She said she really liked the language in Orange County’s vision, and that the

Authority Board could use their ideas and change the language to make it more specific as conditions arose and just run with it from there. She said she would try and produce a less technical and more appealing way forward.

Vice Chair Smith said she had researched other county vision statements and would volunteer to work on a vision statement for the Rappahannock County Broadband Authority.

OPEN BOARD DISCUSSION

Chair Donehey said the only concern she had from the previous discussions and presentations was the number of towers Shentel proposed building for its fixed wireless system. She expressed uncertainty over what Shentel meant by “small” towers⁹.

Vice Chair Smith in contemplating small towers the County could be contemplating not only size but also encouraging construction of camouflaged towers. She wondered, if the County were contemplating 80-foot towers out of other materials besides wood, there would have to be an emphasis on camouflage for them.

Mr. Curry said these and relating issues will be on the next Planning Commission agenda. It would also be addressing what rules should be wrapped around erecting a tower.

ADJOURN

Vice Chair Smith moved to adjourn, and Mr. Parrish seconded the motion. The motion carried. The meeting was adjourned at 7:33 p.m.

Aye: Donehey, Parrish, Smith, Whitson, Frazier.

Nay:

Abstain:

Submitted:

Margaret Bond, Secretary

⁹ According to Dan Meenan’s earlier presentation, Shentel defines “small” as 100 feet. See discussion above. Bryan Byrd previously said the towers anticipated for the RDOF service area would be between 80 and 150 feet.