

Broadband Advisory Committee Minutes
12/12/2019

Attendees:

Robert Hiss (County Administrator), Traci Blido (County Econ Dev. Dir.), Amanda Kaufman (Deputy County Administrator), George Condyles (The Atlantic Group - Consultant), Anthony Smith (Blue Ridge Towers), Sean Cai (Blue Ridge Towers), Warner Hall (Brisnet), Andy Dooley (BOS), Ed Hoisington (BCPS), Greg Modzelewski (Broadband Advisory Committee), Edgar Tuck (BOS).

Allen called the meeting to order and welcomed everyone. Several citizens expressed having difficulty in find the county's broadband page. Robert agreed to look into this and make it easier to find from the county's home page. George thanked Amanda and BRT for their efforts on the grants. County staff has everything needed to move forward with the grants and present them to the BoS for approval.

George shared he is meeting with the city of Roanoke to assist them as Shentel is looking to become a cable provider. George shared this as he feels it is just a matter of time before Shentel approaches Bedford County. Shentel being a cable provider will put them in competition with Comcast.

George shared that many of the project delays are being created due to lack of coordination or communication between internal staff members. He described staff not being aware when crews show up to work at tower sites as an example. The delays are creating stop and starts at a number of sites. Many of the parties involved are contractors and when you have them lined-up for a given day and someone questions why they are there, it can disrupt the workers and they may leave before it is resolved.

Issues at the 3 BRWA sites remain. BRWA has elected to consider all three as an all or nothing deal. Several members of the Broadband Authority (i.e. BoS) will be meeting this coming Monday (12/16) with several BRWA board members in the hope that things can be worked out and approval will be given by the BRWA board when they meet on Tuesday (12/17). While no permits can be issued for these sites until there is approval, BRT and county staff have been working on the necessary paperwork, to shorten the time it takes to get the permits. It should be noted the New London water tower is a key microwave/back haul site and it is critical to the project.

George commented that the Bedford County School Board has been very easy to work with and thanked them for their cooperation.

Anthony shared that the tower at Big Island is now stacked and completed. The towers come in sections and are stacked atop one another as they are built. They are now working on the other Big Island site which is to be delivered on 12/14 and erected by the end of next week. They have also broken ground at the Huddleston site. The plan is to complete the building of 5 towers by the end of this year. It appears that the planned tower location at Shady Groove is "fill dirt", most likely from when the firehouse was built. This means the soils and foundation area will need to be worked on to ensure the tower has a sound base for support. This will have an an estimated cost of \$15,000-\$20,000. Anthony submit the change request to the county.

Efforts are still underway to finalize how the Moneta site will be handled. A plan of action was established and the committee members were all in agreement.

The tower management agreement has not been finalized as there are a few small issues to be resolved. It is felt this should be resolved in the next few weeks. It should be noted the tower management agreement does not address any mini-pop sites. The mini-pop sites will be a separate effort and agreement after the original project plan is completed.

The county has met with SCS Broadband and they are in agreement with the county plan as it relates to the second position on the tower and the back payments owed to the county. SCS expressed their concern with possible technology interferences. BRT feels this will be worked out and not be an issue. SCS shared they may need to build some mini-pops to reach current customers once they are moved down on the tower. Currently, this is only a verbal agreement with SCS and Mr. Hiss said he will formalize this in a written agreement.

Anthony informed the county he will be requesting a 129-day extension of the project in the form of a letter this month. Staff said that will be helpful in communication of project delays to grant providers.

BRT has received the frequency license for microwave equipment between the towers. It should be noted there will not be a licensed frequency between the towers and mini-pops.

County Broadband Website can be found at:

<https://www.bedfordcountyva.gov/boards-commissions/broadband-authority>

Next meeting will be held 1/9/2020 at 10 a.m., again in the Main Floor Training Room in the Bedford County Administration building.

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**Minutes submitted by Greg Modzelewski*