

Bedford Broadband Advisory Committee
Meeting Minutes July 9, 2020 - 10:00am
County Administration Building, 122 E. Main Street

Chairman Allen Boaz opened the meeting at 10 am and said he would like phase 2 to be discussed since the Blue Ridge Towers project is near completion.

Mr. Hiss said that may be good timing as the County's CARES Act funding could help meet the Phase 2 needs once we see where the coverage gaps are in late summer (\$1.5M currently set aside in draft CARES budget for broadband.)

A discussion followed about what the needs may be for school age children that would need connections for online school this Fall. Could the CARES act cover connection fees for eligible students if a set of criteria is developed over the next few weeks and a plan determined for what is needed? Additional conversation was held about mini-pop sites and how to advance that process within the short timeframe required under CARES. Various potential models were discussed and it was decided that a small group would convene a meeting to define a program.

1. Old Business

- Chairman Boaz asked Mr. Hiss about the Tower Management RFP status and he said none have been received at this time. Chairman said he believes the county would be better served if Anthony could market the towers to providers because he has the relationships with them.

2. Project Status Report Through July 2 – George briefed the group on the sites he had visited and what was operational and what still needed to be done.

(Tracker Updated on First and Third Fridays of Each Month. Milestone and Budget Trackers Attached)

- **Big Island**
- **Big Island Elementary**
- **Montvale**
- **Hardy Collection**
- **Shady Grove**
- **McGhee Road**
- **Boonsboro**
- **Moneta**
- **Huddleston**
- **New London**
- **Wheat Valley**
- **Landfill**

Anthony briefed the group about progress on each tower. Moneta and Wheat Valley towers are actively under construction with the tower stacking scheduled over the next two weeks.

Briscnet is deploying network equipment on the Hardy, Shady Grove, McGhee Road, and Landfill tower sites. These will be the next set of towers to "go live."

Fiber Update – Update from BRT/VDOT –

Fiber is still being run to the New London, Moneta, and Huddleston towers. Huddleston fiber is posing challenges due to an 11th hour request to reroute by Southside Electric. George and the Committee recommended installing temporary microwave backhaul until the final fiber route can be determined and executed because there may be a 45-day wait for Southside Electric to provide that route. If the approximate 2-mile route as requested from Southside Electric is the only option, then this will be an unbudgeted expense.

3. Broadband Equipment Installation – Update from Briscnet

Anthony said the New London equipment is now on track and they will send a paint crew up there to refresh the paint on the water tower and they would have to wait on magnetic mounts to arrive from a vendor. The mounts are expected to arrive on July 30 and they will install them on Aug. 4 or 5, weather depending. Anthony said he worries because the vendor is the only one in the nation that makes these and if there are any production or shipping delays due to COVID-19, it would be out of their control. They will do everything in their power and have all other sites completed but the New London site will be the final one due to the mounts and previous delays.

4. Change Order Discussion – George briefed the group on the McGhee Rd. change order for \$6,095.53 and two other change orders, one for Wheat's Valley due to a slope that needs to be leveled out and one for Big Island for a retaining wall that is needed, due to legacy run off issues. Mr. Hiss requested that a summary sheet of the three required bids (comparing price and time) for the Wheat's Valley and Big Island retaining walls be provided for his approval.

6. Broadband Phase II Discussion – (discussed at beginning of meeting and the consensus was to roll out the service and then see where the holes are.)

7. Good of the Order – Traci briefed the group on the Shentel VATI grant and the number of homes and areas it could help.

8. Adjourn

Next Meeting: August 13th at 10:00am at the County Administration Building (122 E. Main Street, Bedford). Virtual participation information will also be provided with the agenda.

Meeting minutes submitted by Traci Blido, Economic Development Dir.

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