

# Lancaster County Broadband Authority



## Minutes of Meeting

September 21, 2018 9:30 a.m.

County Administration Building

**1. Call to Order & Approval of Minutes:** The regular meeting of the Lancaster County Broadband Authority convened at 9:30 a.m. in the County Administration Building. Cassie Thompson, Gary Silverman, and Kevin Bean were present along with Bob Westbrook. Margie Armen and David Pere participated by conference call. Minutes of the August 31 and September 7 meetings were approved as presented. No meeting was held on September 14 to allow the meeting space to be used by the County emergency management team if called for due to storm response.

### **2. Old Business:**

#### A. Status Reports

Technical – Kevin reported that Glenn Rowe will get us access to build our web page within the County’s website. Joe Urban has offered to help us with that as well. We agreed the following information should be on the official website: our email contact information, our meeting schedule (dates, times and location), our public outreach efforts and information, including the survey whenever it is ready, minutes of our regular and any special meetings and selected articles of interest. Kevin indicated that Rack Space, the County’s shared information service will not be available to us, so we will continue to use the Google drive. Gary discussed that we will need to decide how information on that drive will be organized.

Policy/Legal -- Margie reported that the Virginia State Corporation Commission received our Articles of Incorporation on September 12 and that it will take some time for the Commission to review and approve them. She also advised that it would not be unusual for it to take several weeks for the Articles to be registered. She will keep checking.

Outreach -- Cassie is in touch with the radio station about an interview to discuss the Authority and the survey. Scheduling is pending more definite information about when the survey will be released.

Survey -- We still don’t have a firm date from CIT as to when the beta survey instrument will be ready for us to review. The CIT survey will be for online response, but we will need to follow up with paper to reach those members of the public who do not have internet available. We have the County’s complete mailing information for the real estate tax bills. It includes 14,995 names/addresses. However, the real estate records will not get us access to the people who live in rental property. Personal property tax records will supplement the real estate files, but still

may not get us to every person in the County from whom a response would be helpful. It should be possible to compare and merge the two tax lists to get the most complete mailing list. On other occasions, we have discussed other outreach methods through the schools and through public forums to reach every county resident.

We also welcomed County Treasurer, Bonnie Dickson, who joined the meeting for a time to discuss survey mailing issues. We had hoped we might be able to include the survey in the County's real estate and personal property tax mailings, but she informed us that both of those bills are sent to the printer in mid-October, which is before the survey will be ready. Bonnie also shared information about the logistics of the tax mailings. The County uses BMS printers in Lynchburg. They take electronic files and do the printing, assembly and mailing of the tax bills. It takes about 10 to 14 days to turn around the tax mailings.

Finance/Budget – Gary and the group discussed the budget for the survey. It was generally agreed that we would ask the Lancaster Economic Development Authority for a grant to cover the cost of the survey. Bonnie left the meeting to check cost information and then rejoined to help us zero in on the cost we might expect to conduct the survey. She reported that for the larger real estate mailing, the printing cost is about \$2,100, and the bulk mail postage is about \$2,900 for a total cost in the \$5,000 range. The personal property tax mailing is to a smaller list and it costs about \$1,900 total. Mailing the survey will also include a postage-paid return envelope, which the tax bills do not. Margie advised that for a bulk mail return envelope, the original mailer only pays for those envelopes that are actually returned, not for all the envelopes that are sent out. We do not yet know how "heavy" the survey mailing might be. That will influence both printing and mailing costs. Survey costs will also have to include the costs of tabulating the results. We may be able to get some volunteer labor to help with that.

Other expense items will also be needed to carry out activities. Once funds have been received, for example, we will need to have accounting software and professional support. We have also spoken generally about other start-up costs, but without assigning any values to them.

The conclusion was reached that Cassie should ask the EDA for a meeting date to present a grant request, and that would push us to have a budget presentation ready with our best estimates of the survey cost and any other activities we would like them to support.

## B. Eagle Landing

David raised the question of moving forward on the Eagle Landing proposal. We again weighed the proposition that obtaining a VATI grant for the Eagle Landing project would be an opportunity to demonstrate that the Authority is capable of success. This was contrasted with the idea that the Authority should develop a comprehensive strategy for its activities after receiving the information from the survey, rather than take a piecemeal approach to projects. Another consideration is whether the Authority presenting a VATI grant request for Eagle Landing is in itself an endorsement of the specifics of the proposal. Margie responded that what we would learn from making a submission would be valuable and she did not view the grant submission as an endorsement of a piecemeal approach to the Authority's responsibility. She also stated her understanding that applying for or receiving a VATI grant is not a Public Private Partnership (P3) activity. It was discussed again that if a grant were selected, it would likely disqualify us

from receiving another grant in the following VATI grant cycle. This is part of the risk/benefit equation.

The Authority also discussed what the next steps should be regarding the Eagle Landing proposal. At our last meeting with the Eagle Landing representatives, they indicated that they endorsed “scenario 3.” Scenario 3 is a modification and significant enlargement of the proposal originally submitted by the Eagle Landing group. At the same meeting, the representatives also indicated that they could not finally request our support until their home owners’ association had approved the modified proposal that would be sent forward. That proposal is for bringing fiber (rather than coaxial cable) to 26 existing homes and 46 unbuilt lots in the Eagle Landing development and 127 homes outside the development at a total cost to all the affected residents of \$26,000 (\$1,000 assessed to each existing Eagle Landing home owner). The residents who first brought the proposal to the Authority had originally negotiated with Atlantic Broadband to cover slightly less than 20% of the line installation cost of their original much smaller proposal. The revised proposal is for approximately 17 miles of fiber serving 199 homes with Atlantic Broadband contributing 25% rather than 20% of the cost. Once that HOA agreement is secured, it was agreed that we should not negotiate with Atlantic Broadband while the renewal of the County’s master agreement was being considered. It would be up to the Eagle Landing residents to obtain Atlantic Broadband’s agreement to the modified and enlarged proposal. We further agreed that we would not take any further action on the proposal until the HOA agreement has been secured.

#### C. VATI “How To Apply” Meeting

Gary indicated that he would not be able to attend the VATI meeting scheduled for Monday the 24<sup>th</sup> in Richmond. He asked that someone else try to attend in his place.

### **3. Pending Actions and Tasks:**

Policy/Legal -- Margie will continue to follow up on the Articles of Incorporation and bring draft by laws to the Authority.

Outreach/Survey -- Dave will speak to Jean Plymale at CIT about the Survey to get more information on the status the timing and content we can expect.

**4. Schedule Next Meeting(s) and Adjourn.** The next meeting will be at the regular place and time: the public meeting room at 9:30 on September 28. The meeting adjourned at 11:10 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Margie Armen,  
Secretary