

**LOUISA COUNTY BROADBAND AUTHORITY
BOARD OF DIRECTORS
LOUISA COUNTY OFFICE BUILDING
1 WOOLFOLK AVENUE
LOUISA, VIRGINIA
October 25, 2016 7:00 P.M.**

Present: Melvin Burruss, Steve Duren, Bernie Hill, Mary Johnson, Mark Luttner, Garth Wermter

Absent: Brian Sullivan

Others Present: Christy Monolo, Assistant County Attorney; Stephanie Koren, Mineral District Supervisor; Fitzgerald Barnes, Patrick Henry District Supervisor; and Bob Hardy, Louisa County Information Technology Director

CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Wermter called the October 25, 2016 worksession of the Broadband Authority (BBA) Board of Directors to order at 7:00 p.m.

Mr. Wermter led the Pledge of Allegiance.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

There was no formal agenda. Mr. Wermter asked that Dr. Cohill present the maps he had prepared.

NEW BUSINESS

Discussion Item- Construction of Wireless Towers

Mr. Wermter asked that all members of the public that were present introduce themselves. They were as follows:

David Holtzman, Central Virginian reporter

Lon Welchel, AccelaNet (purchased CVA link and has purchased/merged with other ISP, wireless, and fiber companies in Central Virginia)

Mr. Frank Gilbert, Louisa County citizen

Ms. Sheila Garrison, representative from Community Wireless Structures

Mr. Sam Smith, owner of iWISP

Dr. Cohill discussed the maps as his initial draft recommendations to the Authority. He stated that they still needed to be evaluated in order to see if existing towers could be used to eliminate the need for some of the proposed new towers.

Mr. Wermter asked for input from the three parties represented and if they would be interested in locating on the towers that were built or if they preferred an alternate tower location.

Mr. Welchel stated that AccelaNet was located on twelve commercial towers in the county and were looking at twenty-four locations that were vertical assets as well as other projects. He stated that his company would need some time to look over the maps provided in order to comment.

It was asked whether there would be any interference with the ten towers. Mr. Smith stated that he was trying to move toward the 5.0 Gigahertz. He said he would be interested as there would be more frequencies to work within that range as well as more interference and better equipment.

Mr. Wermter asked Mr. Smith whether the coverage was too broad for 2.4 Gigahertz. Mr. Smith stated that he was not familiar enough with the tree coverage in the county to know if that were true or not.

There was further discussion regarding the propagation maps.

Mr. Smith asked what kind of service the Authority was anticipating to provide. Dr. Cohill stated that the strong signal would be ten megabytes or better. The weak signal would be five megabytes or less.

There was discussion as to whether service could be provided through canopy. Mr. Welchel stated that ten miles would work if the towers were in line of sight, however, canopy would not allow service to be provided with ten miles of space.

There was further discussion regarding the proliferation of utility poles. Mr. Welchel asked how many 70 foot poles were used in the calculation of the map.

There was further discussion regarding permitting regulations for the poles.

Mr. Wermter stated that one of his hopes was to establish the locations where new infrastructure in the county would be beneficial.

There was further discussion on the propagation map and the providers' potential interest in the location of the towers for the purpose of distributing broadband next to existing towers.

Mr. Hardy discussed several locations of towers. Mr. Smith asked if the map designated the use of all the towers. Mr. Hardy stated that not all towers share their information for cell and ISPs for marketing and business purposes.

It was asked how high on the towers carriers could be. It was stated that it depends on the availability of real estate.

There was further discussion on particular towers' height.

Mr. Hardy proposed using five existing towers for radios only, ten new towers, and identifying the locations of existing providers in order to provide coverage to the county in the most economical way.

There was discussion on the number of towers and cost estimation of existing versus new towers as well as rent and control of the towers. It was asked whether radios could be incorporated onto existing towers and whether it would be better to avoid areas with already existing providers. It was stated that it would not be a major revenue generator for the local government unless towers were put up and available at substantially lower costs than what the commercial tower owners were charging in order to get county wide coverage.

Mr. Wermter asked what the typical rent for one of the WISPs at 160' to 175' was. Mr. Smith stated that he typically paid \$400-\$450 on the towers he located on, however, they were abandoned cell towers. He stated that he had been quoted for a National Tower at \$800 per month. It was stated that WISPs expected to pay anywhere from \$600-\$1,000 per month.

There was further discussion on where existing towers were, and Mr. Hardy stated that he could gather additional information on locations. Two parties stated that they would prefer not to be on towers at a higher cost.

Mr. Wermter asked to overlay the proposed builds on the map. There was further discussion on the proposed builds on the map.

It was asked where the parties would hypothetically like to provide better service to their customers without disclosing their locations.

The three parties discussed on the map where they would have an interest in coverage and construction.

Ms. Garrison stated that Community Wireless Structures did have elevated spots on their towers that would be of interest. She stated that she would send that information to the Authority.

Mr. Burruss asked what price that the County would offer for backhaul. Mr. Hardy stated that the price would be roughly \$250-\$350 per month.

There was further discussion on what locations the companies would potentially be interested in. Mr. Wermter and Mr. Hardy stated that if they were interested in certain locations but wanted to keep it confidential, they could email their requests to Mr. Hardy.

Mr. Hardy stated that the County was not trying to compete with cellular towers, but rather wanted to provide broadband to the county at an economical price.

Dr. Cohill stated that they would start working with Mr. Massie, Louisa County Procurement Officer, to draft an RFP or IFB before the end of November and would continue to finalize the tower locations. He stated that the Authority needed to talk to the schools to see if they would allocate school space for any towers.

Mr. Wermter requested that Mr. Hollins focus on the sites that were discussed (P6, P7, and P8) that lacked coverage for initial placement. He stated that he would like to focus on solidifying the western portion of the county.

There was further discussion about the coverage areas in the mentioned locations.

There was discussion on the DHCD grant. Mr. Wermter stated that the Authority had built into their bylaws the ability to accept unsolicited proposals. He stated that the DHCD grant was a great example that county staff would be looking into.

FINAL COMMENTS

Mr. Wermter restated to the present parties that any requests or comments should be communicated via email to Mr. Hardy. Mr. Wermter stated that the county did not want to compete, but rather to offer Broadband and allow interested parties to locate on towers in order to serve Louisa County citizens. He stated that there may be opportunities to co-locate and subsidize. Mr. Wermter thanked all parties for attending the work session.

NEXT MEETING

The next Broadband Authority meeting will take place on Wednesday, November 2, 2016, at 7:00 pm.

ADJOURNMENT

On the motion of Mr. Hill, seconded by Mr. Duren, which carried by a vote of 6-0, the Board voted to adjourn the October 25, 2016, work session at approximately 8:30 p.m.

BY ORDER OF:

GARTH WERMTER, CHAIRMAN
BOARD OF DIRECTORS
LOUISA COUNTY BROADBAND AUTHORITY