

## MINUTES

### Regular Meeting of the Board of Directors of the Eastern Shore of Virginia Broadband Authority

January 28, 2021

Board members in attendance were: John Reiter, Mike Mason, Charles Kolakowski and Elaine Meil.

ESVBA management participating in the meeting who were in attendance: Robert Bridgham and Leah Hoopes (Secretary)

Members of the public attending were: Andrew Zubko

Ms. Meil called the meeting to order at 2:01 pm.

#### **AGENDA ADOPTION**

*Mr. Reiter moved to adopt the agenda. Mr. Kolakowski seconded. Motion passed unopposed.*

#### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Andrew Zubko: Mr. Zubko is a board member of Captain's Cove and is looking for financial assistance to build out the Cove.

#### **REVIEW OF MINUTES**

*Mr. Reiter moved to approve the Regular Board meeting minutes from December. Mr. Mason seconded. Motion passed unopposed.*

#### **SYSTEM STATUS & BUILD REPORT**

1. WiFi Hotspots- There are currently 24 hotspots in service. The Authority built 2 miles down Captain's Cove and the Cove has funded another 2 miles. Mr. Mason asked how much penetration the hot spots are getting in the trailer parks. Mr. Bridgham replied that homes within a couple hundred feet

of the hotspot are able to access the internet.

Mr. Mason asked if the Captain's Cove build was strictly aerial.

Mr. Bridgham replied that it was and that almost all of the remaining build will be underground.

Mr. Mason stated that the public WiFi hotspot locations were based on areas with a high density of Accomack County Public School students without internet.

Ms. Meil asked if there were any new hotspots in Northampton County.

Mr. Bridgham replied that there are now hotspots at Ebenezer AME and Bayview Heritage Gardens.

2. Residential Broadband- Mr. Bridgham reported that the Authority has 1352 active residential customers. He stated that there are 56 customers in service in Harborton, 22 in Bobtown, 47 in Church Neck, 47 in Sanford, 2 on Cheapside, 3 on Cobbs Station, 78 in Accomac, 6 in Townsend, 19 in Greenbackville, 46 in Atlantic, 37 in Wattsville/Horntown, 52 in Oak Hall, 69 in Hallwood, 29 in Painter/Quinby, 40 in Eastville, 31 in Nassawadox, 7 in Oyster, 132 in Exmore, 49 in Belle Haven, 41 in Cheriton, 28 in Wachapreague, 232 in Onancock, 169 in Cape Charles, 76 in Parksley, 5 in Nocks Landing, 27 in Saxis, and 2 on Chincoteague.

Mr. Bridgham stated that the number of homes are based off of where the Authority was 3 years ago

3. WISP EVPL Program- Mr. Bridgham informed the BOD that 56 sites are in service, 8 new sites on-order and underway.
4. Microcommunity Program- There are 8 communities that are in service and 11 others that are in various stages of progress.
5. CARES projects in Accomack & Northampton- Both Accomack & Northampton Counties have additional CARES Act funding that was supposed to expire on 12/30/2020 but has been extended until 12/31/2021. This has created an opportunity for the Counties to consider funding additional broadband projects in the two counties and have asked the ESVBA to provide some projects that would fit the needs of the CARES funding. Mr. Bridgham has provided each county a simple presentation of failed microcommunities, network extensions, and target areas outlining the fiber length, the construction costs and the number of homes that the extension would enable. He also proposed that the

Counties consider using some of the funding to help offset customers that have cost-prohibitive installation fees due to construction costs. The Counties could also consider offering a discount off of the ESVBA installation to households that meet certain income thresholds to help increase the availability for low-income families.

Mr. Reiter asked when are the counties are expected to have answers. Mr. Mason stated that they are going to present a plan to the board of supervisors at the February meeting.

### **OLD BUSINESS.**

- a. Approve FY20 Final Audit-** Mr. Bridgham presented the Audit to the Board.

Mr. Bridgham stated that the last paragraph on page 5 is a mistake.

Mr. Mason asked if the Authority received a Management Letter.

Mr. Bridgham stated that they received a Management Letter with the last Audit but have not received one yet.

Ms. Meil asked about the “bad debt” and how the Authority plans to proceed with it.

Mr. Bridgham replied that he has been working on a Collections Policy that he will present to the board when it’s completed.

Ms. Meil suggested making a note in the Audit that the last payment for the ANEC loan has been made.

Mr. Mason moved to accept the FY20 Audit. Mr. Reiter seconded. Motion passed unopposed.

- b. Address contractor complaint-** This item is being tabled.

### **NEW BUSINESS.**

- a. Circuit/Capacity Rehoming -** Mr. Reiter asked what the current cost is.

Mr. Bridgham explained that the typical rehoming fee is \$100 unless there is extensive engineering.

Mr. Bridgham also stated that the only downside is administrative.

- b. Member selection for compensation committee –**

Ms. Meil appointed Mr. Reiter to the committee.

- c. Captains Cove Buildout-** Mr. Bridgham presented the map to the board.

Mr. Reiter asked how many customers the map represents.

Mr. Bridgham stated that the map represents about 1000 potential residents, with 350 committed subscribers.

Mr. Mason asked if the Authority needs permission from anyone to start the construction process in Captain's Cove.

Mr. Bridgham stated that they would need permission from the HOA and the home owners.

Mr. Bridgham also explained to the board that Captain's Cove would like to complete the project in phases.

Mr. Mason encouraged the Authority to look into different grant options to help fund the project.

Shannon Wright is a committee member for Captain's Cove and spoke about the individuals seeking service and the need for broadband. She clarified that there are now about 400 committed subscribers.

Mr. Mason asked for a rough estimate if engineering was done in house.

Mr. Bridgham explained that it would be around \$65k and would take about a month to complete.

Ms. Meil asked if the Authority has funds to cover the costs.

Mr. Bridgham stated that the Micro Community fund has almost been expended and the board will be discussing what to do with the remaining funds from the bond in the February meeting.

Mr. Bridgham would like to present the cost estimates to the board at the February Meeting.

The board agreed to add this item to the Work Session in February.

### **TREASURER'S REPORT**

Ms. Meil asked if the decline in cash is because of the Bond buildout and if that will level out soon.

Mr. Mason explained that bond proceeds are still being spent.

### **BOARD COMMENT**

Mr. Reiter would like to Congratulate the Authority on reaching the 6 figure income for residential services.

Mr. Mason thanked Mr. Bridgham and the staff for the assistance in setting up all the public WiFi hotspots in a timely manner.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 3:36

These minutes were approved at the March 25, 2021 meeting of the Board of Directors of ESVBA.

Frank Meier  
Presiding Officer

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Leah Hoopes  
Leah Hoopes, Secretary