

**LOUISA COUNTY BROADBAND AUTHORITY  
BOARD OF DIRECTORS  
LOUISA COUNTY OFFICE BUILDING  
1 WOOLFOLK AVENUE  
LOUISA, VIRGINIA  
November 18, 2015 7:00 P.M.**

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Present: Melvin Burruss, Bernie Hill, Steve Duren, Garth Wermter, Mark Lutner, Brian Sullivan, and Mary Johnson

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

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**CALL TO ORDER**

Mr. Burruss called the November 18, 2015, worksession of the Broadband Authority (BBA) Board of Directors to order at 7:00 p.m.

Mr. Burruss led the Pledge of Allegiance.

**ADOPTION AND AMENDMENT OF THE AGENDA**

On the motion of Mr. Hill, seconded by Mr. Hardy, which carried by a vote of 7-0, the Board approved:

- Changing the order of Adoption of Agenda, switching a and b

**NEW BUSINESS**

There was no new business.

**OLD BUSINESS**

**Discussion –E-Rate Funding**

Mr. Lutner provided a brief introduction mentioning that funding had changed, and E-Rate had changed educational technology. E-Rate was designed to offset the cost for K-12 schools. Schools in need could always get priority funding, however, for schools like Louisa, it is not so easy. Mr. Lutner indicated that Louisa has gotten \$4.5 million in reimbursement and has modernized the program. He mentioned that E-Rate will hopefully be subsidizing at its seventy percent discount making it much more affordable. Schools having their own fiber- optic connections to the schools will allow control.

He said that current contracts expire summer 2017, and the Federal guidelines require a one Gigabyte connection by 2019 which is ten times what they have now. Mr. Lutner summarized the goals:

- 1.) Louisa County Public Schools would like to solicit informational bids for a one Gigabyte connection from the high school to each of the four elementary schools. (The high school has a good core and a solid generator so most things will be migrating from the middle school to the high school.)
- 2.) Louisa County Public Schools will gather information and pursue the best possible solution for LCPS under E-Rate reimbursement guidelines. Mr. Lutner mentioned that what is best for LCPS is probably also the best thing for the Broadband Authority.
- 3.) Schools will continue to partner with the Broadband Authority and the Louisa County Government to assist and reach common goals.

There are three different options that are being looked at: lent, dark, and self-provision. From a value standpoint, they have to look at the best possible solution. Lent fiber is the connection that provides end to end service for traffic flow. Dark fiber means that the provider will own it and will rent out to the customer. However, the equipment will be put on the end by the customer. Self-provision is typically more expensive up front, but over the long-term, it can save money. Also, it gives more control over what is done. However, there is still a support fee in case something gets cut or there is any trouble.

Mr. Hardy asked if there were further questions. There were none.

It was asked what Mr. Lutner's preference would be. He mentioned that Self- Provision would probably be the best overall.

Mr. Lutner gave a rough timeline that would be January and February when vendors come in. They would hope to look at selective vendors in February or March. At that point, the Louisa County School Board and Board of Supervisors would be informed and E-Rate would then either deny or accept within the timeframe of May through August.

He stated the State of Virginia may decide that it is in the Governor's budget to contribute ten percent more. In addition, E-Rate may add ten percent which means that they would only be spending ten cents on the dollar. They would begin running cable in the fall of 2016 with completion in the fall of 2017. The plan would be to run twelve strands to each school, making six pairs. The high school would be used as the center.

A question was raised as to how much it would cost to run double, or twelve stands. Mr. Lutner stated that the main cost is the engineering and putting it in the ground, not the actual fibers.

Another question was raised as to under E-Rate, what restrictions come into play as to what the fiber is used for. Mr. Lutner answered that it has to be for educational purposes. Along the way, if the Authority decides to do something with Louisa County Schools, then the costs will be significantly less than if they ran the cable themselves. There could also be a partnership with

other school divisions which means that internet could start being bought in bulk in order to get a significant deal.

Mr. Lutner presented a map that highlighted in red where MidAtlantic is running cable in the fall of 2016 from Route 33 into the Town of Mineral, up Route 522 all the way to Culpepper. He mentioned that could be a mixed scenario. The school buildings are in strategic locations as they are on main roads. The blue line is what they would be proposing. Mr. Lutner stated that he will continue to work very closely with Mr. Hardy, the Board of Supervisors, and the School Board to provide additional information.

A question was addressed as to how Mr. Lutner envisions the potential wireless project being incorporated with the school internet plan and the benefits of combing the two. Mr. Lutner said he would love to see the Broadband Authority be able to work with the School Board to create an infrastructure.

Further discussion ensued as to what would happen if they do not get the E-Rate. Mr. Lutner said that contracts expire in 2017. He stated that they will at least have formal numbers and potential funding.

Questions and comments were addressed by the Authority regarding whether the contract with Verizon could be one year or if it had to be two years. Mr. Lutner stated that if they extended the deal, it would depend on what was bought and where it was put, and whether they have service there.

Discussion ensued among the Authority regarding: whether E-Rate provides maintenance and what it would cost if they were Self- Provisional; what the total cost is for internet or cable for Verizon and Comcast; how the Broadband Authority could still be a partnership if they do not get the E-Rate; whether there was any flexibility for any community based public- private partnerships that wanted to sponge off of E-Rate funding to expand the cables; and if the people who administer E-Rate look favorably upon applications that reflect the community-based and school and library solutions.

Mr. Lutner stated that there is a provision that says if you are awarded these things and you are over a certain dollar amount, E-Rate will pay their portion up front. A question was raised to this comment of whether this is a reimbursement or grant program. Mr. Lutner stated that E-Rate works both ways. It is the vendor's responsibility to get his money back.

Mr. Lutner was invited back to speak at the meeting in April or May for an update.

Questions and comments were addressed in regards to the Special Notes section and if it would be allowable for the project manager to be from the Broadband Authority and to be responsible for the E-Rates package for school and community use. It was answered that it would need to be looked into.

There were no further questions.

## **Discussion – Update: Wireless Communication Committee presentation for the Board Meeting**

Mr. Barnes asked for clarification on some of the existing towers. There was discussion on the towers and what exactly the Authority would be asking the owners space for. Mr. Barnes said that the Authority needed to come before the Board with knowledge about the actual number of polls.

It was stated that the approximate locations for the polls was known. Ms. Johnson stated that if towers are installed, there would be total control of the towers. She asked what specifically needed to be asked for and looked for in regards to existing towers.

The towers represent transport capabilities and access points for wisps for local or step out access for the next location and the ten locations represent the bare minimum; it cannot be cut back any further.

Ms. Johnson stated that it needed to be explained clearly why the specific ten towers needed to be used rather than others in the area.

Mr. Barnes asked whether there was a way to reduce the cost of putting up the ten poles. It was answered that existing county resources have been used by defending the value rather than talking about the cost. It was also stated that this is the expected scenario since there has not been an RFP or request for funding yet.

Mr. Barnes also asked how long the process would take. It was stated that it was expected that the full process would take six months to a year. Mr. Hardy stated that there will be effort at every chance to reduce the price if it meets all of the requirements.

The issue was raised as to what is the reasonable case for spending \$1 million. Mr. Barnes mentioned that service will be an issue, and the Board will want to know when the money will be returned. A comment was made as to how much the vendors would be using. Mr. Lutner said that the County would not be receiving any money back. This is the minimum amount of money to be spent on the project to see if there is adequate interest from private sector vendors.

Mr. Barnes stated his strongest recommendation would be talking one on one with Board representatives so that they understand the numbers and are comfortable with them prior to the public hearing. He added that the RFP process should move forward in January.

Ms. Johnson commented that the Board of Supervisors has asked for a method to provide broadband to citizens, thus it should be considered a utility.

Ms. Koren brought up the issue of citizens not being supportive of government funding for this project.

Mr. Hardy asked about the revenue from the waterline. He stated it is important that this issue is mentioned in the work session so that it is not an issue in the public meeting. It was discussed that a work session should be held before the December 21<sup>st</sup> meeting.

Mr. Barnes asked Ms. Johnson what would happen to the committee if the Board does not approve the towers. Mr. Lutner stated that they would come back to the Authority to ask for guidance. Mr. Barnes advised doing the work session on December 7<sup>th</sup> in order to have more time and to answer all questions for the Board of Supervisors.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

Mr. Brian Edwards commented on the funding of the project of the Broadband Authority and advised them to define the providers and what they could seriously have to offer. In addition, he advised asking for ten feet of vertical space for back hole and tents, and twenty by eighty feet for ground space and generators. He advised verifying the capability of the structure and defining the locations better as well as talking to the operators in the County as to where the towers should be located.

Mr. Lutner commented that the idea for surveying the providers is not an option at this point. Mr. Barnes mentioned that the vast majority of the community is getting restless about this project.

**WEBSITE UPDATE**

There was no discussion at this time.

**ADJOURNMENT**

On the motion of Mr. Hill, seconded by Ms. Johnson, which carried by a vote of 7-0, the Board voted to adjourn the November 18, 2015, worksession at approximately 8:45 p.m.

BY ORDER OF:

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MELVIN BURRUSS, CHAIRMAN  
BOARD OF DIRECTORS  
LOUISA COUNTY BROADBAND AUTHORITY