

# MATHEWS BROADBAND ADVISORY BOARD MEETING

21 May 2020 9:00AM ZOOM Update Meeting Online

## Minutes



To thrive, not just survive!

**Present: Judy Rowe, Nancy Welch, Rob Quartel, Mindy Conner, Julie Kaylor, Thomas Jenkins, Amy Dubois, Jackie Ingram, Bill Vrooman, Greg Lewis, Buzz Lambert, Emily Allen, Dee Russell, Willie Love, Joe Syslo, Marvin Frame. Carol Steele, Sherry Hamilton**

The meeting opened with Rob Quartel acting as host for this Tent Zoom meeting. Judy Rowe started the meeting by saying that we are in an emergency mode and we need to move forward, using the example of schools and what will happen in September. She turned the meeting over to Mindy Conner to update the group on what was happening with county staff concerning broadband.

Mindy introduced the possible VATI grant application with Gloucester and Middlesex. She turned the floor to Carol Steele, Gloucester's Deputy County Administrator, who is leading the work on this VATI grant project.

Carol told us about the scope of the project that has the capacity to reach 300 - 400 homes in Mathews and more in Middlesex. This would involve working with ISP Open Broadband. She urged us to fine tune our addresses and offered to help us improve what we currently have. Carol Steele, Mindy Conner and Julie Kaylor referenced talks about a possible second VATI grant with Lancaster and several other counties that would partner with Atlantic Broadband. Numerous broadband groups are meeting this afternoon. One in particular of interest to Mathews is with the FCC to learn more about the uses of the CARES Act Funding from which Mathews received around \$770,000. If this can be used for broadband in any way, this board is asking that we proceed immediately in hiring the administrative and professional assistance that the county staff needs now.

Rob Quartel brought up funding possibilities through GoVirginia grants. Those funds can be available in a much shorter time, if we can qualify. He also noted conversations with Mindy Conner and Schwartz??? about King and Queens's broadband program.

Nancy Welch reported next on the schools and the problems with connectivity for students and teachers and even herself. Temporary deployment of hot spots have helped some students in some areas. Purchasing of 700 Chrome Books will help students. If they do not have service, however, limited hot spots were supplied strictly for distance learning. Noting how much students lose over the summer, Nancy expressed great concern with the loss of extra months this spring and what it might mean moving forward. Bill Vrooman further reported on the Chrome Books and hot spots and some of the issues he had discovered in trying to put them in use with students. Nancy also referenced the Governor's Discretionary Fund of \$56 million that a coalition of small counties is lobbying for it to be used for broadband in counties like Mathews.

Dee Russell recommended that we put out another letter on these issues to be available to anyone to send in support of our broadband needs.

The meeting was adjourned. It was recorded and will be posted on the county website.

Submitted by Judy Rowe