

## Broadband Advisory Committee Meeting

October 20, 2022

### Attendance:

Megan DelGaudio	Chris DeBosier (Verizon)
Heather Tinnelli	Paul Plymouth (Verizon)
Alison Davis	James Benson (Kennersley Farms)
Andrew Costello	Tom Payne (Kennersley Farms)
Ed Cummins	Karl Kehm (Kennersley Farms)
Ben Schaffle	Dave Mallon (Amanda Lane)
Ed Clower	Bill Persina (Amanda Lane)
Dion Reed	
Brian Riley	
Todd Mohn	
Andre DeMattia (Talkie)	
Andrew DeMattia (Talkie)	
Russ Chandler (Verizon)	

Ben Motion to start; Alison 2<sup>nd</sup> 4:04 pm

Megan started off by thanking the Kennersley Farm residents for initiating the conversation with Verizon. Paul Plymouth from Verizon introduced himself. He is the lead for State Governmental affairs for the Eastern shore. Would like to also present at some time other options for obtaining connectivity. There is an Affordable connectivity program – Federal subsidy.

Megan - FIOS – is this in QAC? Potential for expansion. Chris DeBosier – Verizon. Do not currently have any open FIOS available for sale in the County. Largely tied to converting some of the copper to fiber.

Megan - How far in the future would it be available? Verizon - Depends on funding and locations that would serve the most people. Wired line network – copper; some has been converted to fiber. Are interested in obtaining grants so that they can complete that. Copper does not need to be dug out. Central Offices are located all through the County. Would add fiber and equipment to those existing sites.

Megan- If you don't get grant funding are you still interested in coming to the County? Verizon - Grants would help to accelerate plans to bring fiber in the County. One of the areas they looked at was QAC but again the issue is capital. Megan - Can you use the fact that people must be able to call 911 to leverage the government to get the necessary funding? Verizon is the main land line phone company; they are required to provide the ability to call 911. Verizon - no government money is available for this.

Is Verizon required to replace the wire to all the houses that have retired the copper at their home? Would run in parallel both copper and wire but no one would be required to switch to fiber. Copper retirement will be heavily scrutinized.

Verizon Wireless- Kennersley Farm – Have been communicating with the Commissioners and Megan concerning the build out of fiber in the rural areas of the County.

James Benson of Kennersley Farms North of Centreville: Do not have reliable broadband from any provider. Need an immediate solution. Rural area. Interested to hear what Verizon could do concerning wireless internet. His current service is marginal. Has been down for 14 days with no service in the past few months. 6 towers are within 3 miles of our community. Is C-Band a possibility? Drops more calls on the landline than the cell phone. C-Band 50 mgs of download and 30mgs upload. Two reasons we don't have usable broadband now: 1. Because of the Talkie Challenge and the 2. existing service has collapsed.

Paul Plymouth – Verizon always investing in network. Opportunities to invest in QAC.

The County has sent addresses at County buildings that are reporting Verizon Wireless issues. Paul is asking that the County continue to send addresses that have issues. They will make note and work with us to address the issues.

Russ Chandler – Operations Director for DC and MD. New installations and maintenance. What is the plan for QAC for 2022? 2 macro sites in 2023 16 sites upgraded or built – some (9) with C-Band abilities – 16 includes the 2 macro sites. Other projects include small cells on power and light poles.

Macro towers are larger and provide more capacity

C-Band – 5G significant amount of bandwidth and more frequency. Verizon is waiting to secure licenses for frequencies from auction at the end of the year.

What coverage does 5G reach -a lot of issues as 5G has expanded. This seems to be because the area covered by 5G is smaller and due to the phone not being smart enough to move to a different tower with better coverage. Verizon noted that this is accurate.

Alison Davis – Capacity add C-Band to populated areas/Macro towers are more for rural Coverage Tower being built at headwaters of Southeast Creek. Would have line of site to Kennersley Farms from that Tower. Economic Development Grant. Are you going to be on that Tower and when? Russ Chandler will get the date and get it back to the committee.

James Benson - Church Hill tower will be 190 feet tall. What about the other towers that are near 213 – over 6 miles away seems that they are just pointed to the adjacent residential areas. Russ will investigate and get back. Businesses in the area would benefit as well.

5G in the Centreville on the plan for next year. Still planning. Depends on the tower. When they add 5G to the tower – more equipment will be installed. 4G will still be there. What does C-Band add to the connectivity with our cell phones and hot spots.? Adds frequency and bandwidth. 600-700 mbps download. Worse case 150 – 200mpbs

Of 16 projects - Church Hill and Queenstown Outlets towers will be new. The rest are going to be adding 5G and C-Band. On at least 10 towers they are going to be upgrading the equipment because they found that they had a vendor with faulty equipment. They are replacing all of that vendor's equipment.

Some areas that were not dead spots have now become dead spots. Cell phone might stick to a weaker signal. Verizon has discovered that the 5G reach was going too far. Will be dialing back the 5G. Will take addresses and investigate it. 117 Amanda Lane No LTE – 118 Amanda Lane can get LTE.

Verizon slide of where they see the under/not served areas. Guidelines have changed 25/3 or less new include 100/20 or less. Verizon will look at all those locations. Where they can take a proposal back to the County. Look at the copper locations and try to use them to add fiber where it makes the most sense.

Megan let everyone know about a grant available from MD – 90% funding to work with an ISP that is willing to provide service to these areas. Due by December 5<sup>th</sup>.

**Talkie** – update on areas that they are building to in the County. Don't really give out dates, there are too many factors that go into construction. Amanda Lane is being prepared to be done end of year to first quarter of 2023.

Willow branch to Amanda Lane Hayden, Hope Road connecting to 304.

Crumpton – 4<sup>th</sup> street to Jim Jungle almost complete. Pull fiber and light up.

Ewingtown Road starting on Saturday.

John Powell next. Pinder Hill Road to Pond Town.

Barclay: Then Land's End and Sudlersville. Will be building to Southeast Creek area, but a grant would move that up on the list. Will be served within the next calendar year. Regardless of if you signed up with them or not, they would cover all of the challenged areas by the end of 2023. (They have until May 30, 2024)

Have they signed the MOU with the State? Not sure or if there is another one coming.

James Benson from K Farms – 26 residences and a Marina, lots of residents who work from home. We understand that there is a challenge in getting into the neighborhood.

When people sign up on Talkie's website then Talkie will know where to go next. There is no obligation and Talkie has no contracts. When they see people sign up that's how they know where to go next.

#### **Updates:**

Connect Grant is back with State. Verizon FIOS offers 300 mg down and 300 mg up.

Grants available for between \$800,000 to 4.5 million. Application has changed. Higher points for cheaper per mile installs.

Asking the group can Megan start working on an RFI that the group can help her edit to submit? Voted yes. UPDATE: Megan asked to change this via email vote to sending an informal request for information to all ISP's due by 11/9 to be reviewed on 11/15. Voted yes

#### **Ben Motion to draft an RFI. Dion Seconded – all others unanimously voted aye**

- 391 surveys came back. 81 no access or wireless considered not served.

- State has another grant going for people with long drive ways (or areas difficult to access) coming out 1<sup>st</sup> quarter of 2023.
- Megan will reach out to Evelyn in St Mary's County. Look at her plan for difficult access locations.
- Comcast called now interested in signing a franchise agreement for Kent Island 1<sup>st</sup> week of November meeting with Brian and Todd Mohn.

Alison thanked the residents for coming and also Megan for all of her hard work.

Opportunity to get in front of Commissioners to discuss progress on Broadband in the County.

**Ed Clower motioned to adjourn at 6:05 pm and Alison Davis 2<sup>nd</sup>.**