

MINUTES
MIFFLIN COUNTY INTERNET ADVISORY COMMITTEE
OCTOBER 18, 2017
MIFFLIN COUNTY COURTHOUSE, MEETING ROOM B – 3:30 P.M.

ATTENDANCE:

MEMBERS:

Clint Aurand, Armagh Township
Michael Hain, Nittany Media
Kristen Ritchey, Comcast
Kay Semler, Mifflin County Planning Commission
Nathan Smith, FAME/FoxPro
Michael Tate, GME

OTHERS:

Chastity Fultz, Mifflin County Planning and Development
Bill Gomes, Mifflin County Planning and Development
Brad Kerstetter, Juniata County Planning
Scott Kramer, SEDA-COG
Jeremy Smith, Century Link
Nate Smitchko, Mifflin County MIS Department
Tim Guffey, Comcast
Lori Comp, Senator Corman's Office
Luanne Eckenrode, Valley Rural Electric
Lauren Kershner, The Sentinel via teleconference

Call to Order: Bill Gomes called the meeting to order at 3:32 p.m. and reminded everyone to sign the attendance sheet.

Comcast Update: Nathan Smith was recently in touch with Tim Guffey, Senior Territory Manager of Comcast Business Services, regarding Comcast and potential projects. Bill invited Tim to share his thoughts and plans from Comcast's standpoint. Tim Guffey stated that Comcast is trying to build their network where they can. He is on the business side of Comcast, but also works with the residential side to maximize their dollars and build out their services. He would like to know where businesses that have needs are located to see if they can get service to them. It was noted that Comcast is mostly in the central corridor of the county and Century Link is north of Jack's Mountain, while Nittany Media is in parts of McVeytown, Oliver, Bratton, Granville and Wayne Townships. Comcast does not know specifics on where to build out their service at this point, but is looking for suggestions on areas to focus. Kristen Ritchey added that it has to make sense to invest the money and expand services, whether residential or business. She also hasn't seen specific areas that are underserved and areas where there is enough demand for service and asked if addresses from the survey could be shared. Bill was hoping that the survey results would show areas where providers could expand and improve service. It was previously voted not to share the names and addresses of respondents, unless the person responded on the survey to share their contact information. Many respondents did not want their information shared. By reviewing the maps developed from the residential survey, general areas in the highest need of service include Armagh, Bratton, Oliver, Wayne and McVeytown areas.

Internet Website Proposal: Part of the mission of this committee was to find a way people could register their concerns. A website was proposed as a vehicle for people to share internet concerns, particularly after an unsuccessful resolution with their provider. GME Communications has been working with the County MIS Department to develop a form that will be available as a link through the County website. Further discussion concluded that Nate Smitchko obtain a subdomain of the county web page with an address of iac.co.mifflin.pa.us. Nate will continue to work with GME Communications to establish the submission form. The form will include name, email, address, phone number, provider and the outcome of contacts with the provider. An open text box will allow the person to state their problems with existing service or if they do not have service and need it. Once the email is submitted, it will be forwarded to the Planning and Development Department for processing. The recipient will receive a confirmation email that the message was sent. A disclaimer will be added to the page to state the purpose of the page as well as guidelines. Kristen will draft a few sentences for this disclaimer and share with the Bill and the rest of the committee. Another topic of discussion was how to raise awareness of this page. It was suggested to inform all townships and municipalities.

School District Survey: The school districts IT Departments, both Juniata and Mifflin Counties, have been working together to make the residential survey work for them. They can use the questions from the residential survey, but will eliminate any open ended questions, as shown in the example submitted by Doug Cunningham of MCSD. There were no objections to this. Internet service is a very important issue to the school districts, especially due to cyber classes. We will share this discussion with Doug.

Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) Application Update: Scott Kramer of SEDA-COG said the application is moving forward slowly. The submission date for the application is the end of December. Betsy Lockwood will present all grant proposals to DCED. Five counties have joined together for the application and include Mifflin, Juniata, Lycoming, Union and Northumberland Counties. Once DCED grants their approval, SEDA-COG will prepare the full application and ask for letters from each participating county. Each county has budgeted the match requirement for the upcoming year.

Verizon, Century Link, Nittany Media and Atlantic Broadband Follow-up: Century Link has several project upgrades across Mifflin and Juniata Counties for VDSL (Very-high-bit-rate digital subscriber line). Most of these will not be completed until the beginning of next year. This will allow a higher speed across a shorter distance. There are no plans for new lines, but this will increase speeds of existing service to 80 Mbps.

Nittany Media has realized through this committee that the county is not lacking the backbones of internet service, but rather service to the end user. They are helping Atlantic Broadband to get their internet service up and running. They are also working with the Zampelli system they recently acquired by upgrading from analog to digital to offer internet service in McVeytown, Mattawanna, Belleville and a portion of Juniata County. Belleville work is complete, but they are having in-house wiring issues. They are behind schedule in the McVeytown area and hoping to get to Port Treverton in Juniata County by the beginning of the year. There is a waiting list for service in McVeytown. They are offering speeds up to 125 Mbps, but have a backlog of modem installs. They also have fiber service in areas.

Michael Hain also provided a brief update on the Broadband Deployment Advisory Committee (BDAC).

Other Business: Luanne Eckenrode of Valley Rural Electric shared that there has been discussion among coops about getting involved in broadband, but the expense is overwhelming. It would have to make

sense for Valley Rural Electric to become involved. She noted that there are advantages for electric companies to offer broadband coverage, but there are disadvantages as well. Broadband is not on the radar for Valley Rural Electric board at this point. If anything changes, she will let the group know.

Approval of Minutes: Michael Hain motioned to approve the June, July and August meeting minutes. Nathan Smith seconded the motion. All members voted aye.

Next Meeting: The next meeting is scheduled for December 20, 2017 at 3:30 p.m.

Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 4:48 p.m.