

**MINUTES**  
**MIFFLIN COUNTY INTERNET ADVISORY COMMITTEE**  
**MAY 17, 2017**  
**MIFFLIN COUNTY COURTHOUSE, MEETING ROOM B – 3:30 P.M.**

**ATTENDANCE:**

**MEMBERS:**

Clint Aurand, Armagh Township  
Michael Hain, Nittany Media  
John Rhone, Wayne Township  
Kristen Ritchey, Comcast  
Kay Semler, Mifflin County Planning Commission  
Nathan Smith, Fame/Fox Pro  
Michael Tate, GME

**OTHERS:**

Lori Comp, Senator Corman's Office  
Chastity Fultz, Mifflin County Planning and Development  
Bill Gomes, Mifflin County Planning and Development  
Brad Kerstetter, Juniata County Planning

Call to Order: Bill Gomes called the meeting to order at 3:35 p.m. and reminded everyone to sign the attendance sheet.

Approval of Minutes: Kay Semler made a motion to approve the minutes from February 15, 2017; March 29, 2017; and April 19, 2017. The motion was seconded by Nathan Smith. All members voted aye.

Business Survey Results: Currently, only 63 responses out of 800+ surveys distributed have been received, which is really poor. Bill reviewed the results of the survey and noted that the response of speed being too slow was a primary reason to the question on current internet adequacy. Another response Bill emphasized was that the business owners use the internet to access data and information. Chastity Fultz will forward the results of the survey to the committee members.

Bill also said the survey had been emailed twice by the Chamber with limited response. The newspaper only printed one article on the survey, even though they were asked multiple times to provide follow-up. Bill would like to find another way to send the survey, possibly through the County email. The County is unable to mail both the business and residential survey due to the cost of mailing and the time and effort required to calculate the results. Mike Tate will check the statistics on the mailing from the Chamber to see how many people actually opened the email or just deleted it. If the survey is emailed from the County, it should be sent in groups of 20-25 people so that it will not be triggered as spam.

Residential Survey: Bill provided a copy of the revised residential survey and asked for additional input. It was suggested to change the fourth question to list internet providers as a possible answer rather than having an open ended box as was on the business survey. Upon reviewing the business survey results, the four main answers for internet provider included Verizon, Comcast, Century Link and Nittany

Media. It was decided to include these four choices as well as an open ended box for other possible providers.

The next suggestion was to possibly add a question at the end of the survey asking if the person filling out the survey would like their contact information to be shared with their internet provider. If the person wishes to be contacted, they could list their name and contact information. This could then be passed along to their provider. Discussion continued that a bigger goal of the committee is to be able to add this service through the Internet Advisory Committee link on the County website, but the internet site is unable to handle the information at this time.

Another suggestion was to clarify question 7, which asks approximately how many internet devices are currently connected to your internet service. The committee would like to add “including wireless devices” to this question.

Mike Tate made a motion to revise question 4 to list Verizon, Comcast, Century Link, Nittany Media, and other with an open ended box as answers; add question 14 to state: “If possible, would you like us to share your contact information with your provider? Yes or No. If yes, please provide your name and contact information.”; clarify question 7 to read “Approximately how many internet devices, including wireless devices, are currently connected to your internet service?”. Michael Hain seconded the motion and all members voted aye.

Walt Whitmer of Penn State Extension Office provided a random sample of the residential survey based on per capita data. Bill stated we need to find an easier way to convert the random sample numbers back to people and addresses. Nathan Smith offered to help create a macro to help with this process.

Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) Application and Center for Rural PA: Bill has reached out to several counties including Juniata, Snyder and Centre Counties to be included in the ARC application. Snyder and Centre Counties have backed out, but Juniata County has indicated they want to be included. Bill has also reached out to MCIDC and is looking for someone to reach out to Juniata County’s equivalent business entity for a donation. SEDA-COG will be the applicant, which will show more collaboration. They will charge an administration fee, however. Bill is anticipating that Mifflin and Juniata Counties will have to commit \$10,000 to \$12,000 each by early 2018 if the application is awarded. Mifflin County Commissioners will adopt a resolution May 18<sup>th</sup> to support the application. The Juniata County Commissioners want to talk with the Mifflin County Commissioners before they act.

Bill has had previous communication with a consulting firm, Design Nine, who thought the cost of a strategic plan could be around \$50,000 for Mifflin and Juniata Counties. The cost increases with additional counties. The Northwest Regional cost was \$100,000 for eight or nine counties. Bill is hopeful this will provide further direction.

If the study does go forward discussion arose as to whether each municipality in the county should contribute financially at around \$500 per municipality. Clint Aurand may be able to attend some of the municipality meetings to explain what this committee is doing and see about financial support. Lewistown Borough may not contribute since they have good internet service. Money collected from the municipalities could help offset some of the administration costs.

It was also suggested to reach out to the school districts. The school systems are eligible for funding through E-Rate. According to Wikipedia, E-Rate is the commonly used name for the Schools and

Libraries Program of the Universal Service Fund, which is administered by the Universal Service Administrative Company (USAC) under the direction of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). The program provides discounts to assist schools and libraries in the United States to obtain affordable telecommunications and Internet access. It is one of four support programs funded through a Universal Service fee charged to companies that provide interstate and/or international telecommunications services. Mike Tate stated that Mifflin and Juniata County School Districts are eligible for these funds, but only receive a small portion of what they are eligible for. Mike also shared that DLI is looking to help write the applications for this funding because the forms are so difficult to complete. The Mifflin County Library pays an outside firm to complete their forms. The E-Rate funds may be used for internet, but not mobile phone services. Mike is working to put firewalls in every school bus with these funds. If students are on a bus for more than one hour, they are supposed to have access to the internet. Jim Zubler is working to help obtain funding for this. Mike Tate will contact Doug Cunningham from the Mifflin County School District to invite him to the next Internet Advisory Committee meeting and Brad Kerstetter will contact the IT person at Juniata County School District.

Century Link and Verizon Follow-up: Kristen Ritchey will check to see if she has a contact for a Century Link. Mike Tate will contact some of the technicians to see if he can find a contact. John Rhone knows some managers at Century Link and will try to find a contact as well. Century Link covers nearly all of Juniata County and half of Mifflin County's internet service.

Bill shared an email he received from Doug Smith of Verizon on their efforts in Mifflin County. Verizon is continuing to work on DSL congestion relief efforts, which should show relief in June. This will make DSL more reliable and customers will actually get the speeds they are paying for.

Copper will continue to be an issue with DSL and will only get worse unless there is a change in technology or copper. Juniata County's copper is not as old as Mifflin County and they do not have as many problems with DSL because of this. Century Link is working on this problem and the group questioned if Verizon plans to follow Century Link in updating technology or copper through bonded service or utilizing the latest generation of DSL. Mike Tate has talked to other Verizon employees who have stated that Verizon is not investing in copper.

The Verizon phase out of email continues, but is being rolled out in phases. Not every customer has received a date yet and no one seems to know a final date this will happen.

Other Business: The Juniata County Library recently received a grant allowing them to obtain Wi-Fi boxes to rent out to patrons at a cost of \$40 per month with unlimited internet access. All government entities and municipalities qualify for this grant. All units obtained by Juniata County have been committed for the next year. DLI is working on a soft launch of a similar program next month. Residents will be able to obtain this service for \$80 per month and commercial locations will pay \$100 per month. The hardware cost is expensive, however. Both Mifflin County and Juniata County Libraries will be invited to the next meeting.

Next Meeting: The next meeting is scheduled for June 21, 2017 at 3:30 p.m.

Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 4:54 p.m. upon a motion made by Mike Tate, which was seconded by Nathan Smith.