

MINUTES
MIFFLIN COUNTY INTERNET ADVISORY COMMITTEE
JUNE 21, 2017
MIFFLIN COUNTY COURTHOUSE, MEETING ROOM B – 3:30 P.M.

ATTENDANCE:

MEMBERS:

Clint Aurand, Armagh Township
Craig Bubb, MABL
Matt Moore, Lewistown Borough
John Rhone, Wayne Township
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
Shelly Williamson, Mifflin County Planning and Development
Brad Kerstetter, Juniata County Planning
Doug Cunningham, Mifflin County School District
Mark Van Ouse, Nittany Media
Ben Fausey, Juniata County School District
Ed Apple, Juniata County School District
Aaron Bennett, Juniata County School District
Bill Wise, Century Link
Joe Centobene, Century Link
Andrew Draper, Century Link
Doug Smith, Verizon via teleconference

Call to Order: Bill Gomes called the meeting to order at 3:33 p.m. and reminded everyone to sign the attendance sheet.

Approval of Minutes: Nathan Smith made a motion to approve the minutes from May 17, 2017. The motion was seconded by Matt Moore. All members voted aye.

Residential Survey Preliminary Results: Approximately 2,000 residential surveys were sent from June 9th through the following week. One problem initially discovered was that some respondents did not include addresses, which does not help identify the location of problem areas. The envelopes of the remaining surveys not mailed out were then coded to capture this information. Shelly Williamson, Intern for Planning and Development, reviewed some of the preliminary responses to the residential survey that was mailed in early June. As of June 21st, 346 surveys have been completed and returned. She provided a breakdown of the results by municipality. Nearly half of the responses subscribe to internet service, but need improved service or other options. As part of the process, the county began receiving requests for the survey from the newspaper articles. A decision was made to accommodate

these requests. If someone calls and requests a survey, it will be sent, but counted separately to keep the statistical sampling valid. For surveys that were returned as undeliverable, the next address on the list in that municipality was selected to keep the validity of the random sample. Bill thanked Lauren Kershner for keeping the Sentinel involved and provided a brief history of how the Internet Advisory Committee began and what has been accomplished to date.

Juniata and Mifflin County School Districts: Doug Cunningham, Director of Information Systems for Mifflin County School District, shared information related to the school district's internet access. Nittany Media is the school internet provider for the administration building and they have access to 1 gigabyte of high speed internet service.

A survey of high school students was completed three years ago that asked the students if they had internet access at home, including smart phones, among other questions. Mr. Cunningham spoke with Jim Estep and offered to survey the parents electronically through family access and suggested keeping the survey to less than four questions for best results.

Mr. Cunningham also stated that online resources have been necessary for years. Curriculum and supplemental information are available in the cloud for student access at home and the school district offers Google docs and Office 365 to the students. The high school also offers access to the library before and after school til 5 p.m. to allow computer access to students who do not have access at home.

Mike Tate recently discovered a federal law that will start mandating internet access to children who have more than one hour of travel to school. This will require Wi-Fi to be available on buses. Mr. Cunningham had reviewed the minutes from the May meeting and read about the discussion of E-rate funding and stated that E-rate funding cannot be used for buses. E-rate funding can only be used if it is located on school grounds and cellular does not count. Mr. Cunningham is not aware of this federal law requirement. Mike Tate is going to install a mobile site with the E. R. Rhodes bus company as a trial.

Juniata County gained access to 1 gigabyte of internet service in August of 2016. As part of a one to one initiative, every student in the school district, grades K-12, received an iPad. Students were given the option to take the iPad home with them for the summer at a one-time cost of \$35, but the school district only had a 25% response rate. Homework cannot be mandated online because most students do not have internet access at home. Teachers are flipping the classroom in regards to teaching methods. Homework is being done in class while listening to lectures can be done at home. This initiative pushes toward more handheld devices, but again there are many students who do not have internet service at home.

Juniata County School District is willing to conduct a small survey if this will help. Brad Kerstetter will work with the Juniata School District while Mr. Cunningham will work with Jim Estep to obtain approval to send a small survey to parents to determine internet access. Bill Gomes asked the group to think of questions for this survey and email them to him and he will forward the information to the schools. One of the questions should emphasize whether those students without internet service at home is due to lack of infrastructure or cost of service. This survey would not be sent until 2-3 weeks after the start of school.

Business Survey Alternatives: As of early May, only 63 business responses have been received out of 800 surveys sent electronically through the Chamber of Commerce. Mike Tate discovered 38% of the original emails sent through the Chamber were never opened. Bill would like to try to send

approximately 200 - 300 business surveys by mail. Discussion continued as to whether these surveys should be targeted since small businesses may not be satisfied with their current internet service while we know the larger businesses appear to be satisfied with their service. Another question was whether Lewistown Borough should be excluded from further outreach because we already know the coverage in the downtown area. It was also discussed whether the survey could be inserted with water or sewer bills. Craig Bubb of the Municipal Authority of the Borough of Lewistown has approximately 400 commercial/industrial customers who receive monthly bills. He can add inserts through his third party billing company. Armagh and Wayne Townships do not use third party billing and Clint Aurand and John Rhone could help in their respective townships by reviewing the Planning Department's listing of businesses and will advise what they can do. John felt his board of Supervisors may be willing to hand deliver surveys to the businesses in Wayne Township. Nathan Smith is willing to work with Bill to determine a random sample of businesses to exclude Armagh and Wayne Townships as well as Lewistown Borough.

Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) Application Update: SEDA-COG is working with Mifflin and Juniata Counties to submit the ARC application. They had to share this opportunity with all of their member counties to determine if there was further interest. Two counties expressed interest and there is a June 30th deadline for all counties to respond.

Century Link and Verizon Follow-up: A couple of committee members praised Century Link for being willing to invest in rural communities and noted that they have added a lot of service to Juniata County and the Belleville area.

Doug Smith stated that as of this morning, 10 out of 29 work orders have been completed in Mifflin County, which should provide some relief to the congestion in the area. This will impact 3,400 circuits with DSL congestion relief. Doug will confirm what area and how many households will be affected. The technicians are waiting for some equipment to complete the remaining work orders and it could be July until the work orders are completed. Verizon performed a survey of traffic patterns to identify delays and congestion.

Nathan Smith asked if Verizon was planning to upgrade to the next generation of DSL. Doug did not know the answer and will ask. He knows the corporation is focused on wireless technology and relieving the existing congestion problems.

Nathan also found a recent article that Verizon is doubling down on fiber and that Verizon realizes fiber infrastructure is necessary to build a 5G network. Doug shared that Verizon has a \$1 billion, three-year contract with Corning for a nationwide deployment of 12 million miles of fiber per year for each of the three years in the contract for 4G coverage and 5G rollout. He noted that 5G is still in trial mode. He also stated that Smart City focus drives fiber spending and is not aware of any activity in Mifflin County. According to the Business Dictionary, a Smart City is defined as a developed urban area that creates sustainable economic development and high quality of life by excelling in multiple key areas; economy, mobility, environment, people, living, and government. Excelling in these key areas can be done so through strong human capital, social capital, and/or ICT infrastructure. Boston has been the first Smart City application and it went very well. This will become the model going forward. This takes a lot of coordination with local officials to provide relief and revise ordinances. Currently, there are only one or two Smart Cities in each state.

Representatives from Century Link attended the meeting to discuss their role. Century Link utilized Connect America funding that is subsidized through the FCC to complete the Mifflintown Exchange. This is the funding that Verizon would not accept. Century Link has no immediate plans for further expansion in Mifflin County, but will continue to support what they do have. They have three exchanges in Mifflin County to include Reedsville, Belleville and Allensville. The Allensville exchange will be receiving upgrades to attain speeds of up to 20. This will utilize the newer DSL technology. Connect America allows the company to upgrade and get fiber closer to homes. Allensville is also getting a cellular upgrade. Century Link representatives did say that they are DSL based and therefore, the closer the customer is to the hub, the faster the speeds and the further away, the slower the speeds. He feels that it is better to focus money where residents have little to no speed. The representatives will stay in contact with the committee. A question was raised as to what can be done if a current Century Link customer is told DSL is not available. The representatives will have to look at the customers individually and suggested that the contact information be sent to them for review.

Other Business: Bill shared an article with the committee on municipal fiber in the United States as well as an article on public-private partnerships. Bill has full versions if anyone is interested.

Next Meeting: The next meeting is scheduled for July 19, 2017 at 3:30 p.m.

Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 5:02 p.m.