

**MINUTES**  
**MIFFLIN COUNTY INTERNET ADVISORY COMMITTEE**  
**JULY 19, 2017**  
**MIFFLIN COUNTY COURTHOUSE, MEETING ROOM B – 3:30 P.M.**

**ATTENDANCE:**

**MEMBERS:**

Clint Aurand, Armagh Township  
Kristen Ritchey, Comcast  
Michael Tate, GME via teleconference  
Michael Hain, Nittany Media

**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  
Kevin Kodish, Mifflin County Commissioner  
Laura Simonetti, Mifflin County GIS  
Brad Kerstetter, Juniata County Planning  
Mark Van Ouse, Nittany Media  
Doug Smith, Verizon via teleconference  
Scott Kramer, SEDA-COG  
Lauren Kershner, The Sentinel

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: Clint Aurand made a motion to approve the minutes from the June meeting. The motion was seconded by Kristen Ritchey. All members voted aye. These minutes will need to be reapproved at a future meeting due to the lack of a quorum.

Residential Survey Results: Residential survey work has been ongoing for the last month and a half. As of today, 561 responses have been returned along with an additional 18-20 more returned from requests made through Facebook or calls to the Planning Office. The rate of return was 28%.

Shelly Williamson, the Planning Department Intern, reviewed the results of the survey. Along with the survey, various maps were created by Laura Simonetti of the Mifflin County GIS Department. One map showed where the responses physically came from across the county. According to this map, the results appear good. A poor response was received from Armagh Township while Kistler Borough did not respond at all. About 80 responses were not able to be mapped because the respondent did not provide their address. Shelly also pointed out that 54% of the respondents stated that they need service or improved service while 34% of the respondents were happy with their current service. It was also noted that not everyone truly needs fast internet service. It was discovered that most respondents do not have students at their address who need internet access.

The question dealing with types of internet connections available at the residence was difficult to chart due to the fact that one person could have responded in multiple ways. A surprising number of dial-up responses was shown. Further discussion revealed that if an address has a land line, they would have access to dial-up and many people confuse DSL with dial-up.

The internet service provider information was placed onto a map and it appears that Big Valley is mostly serviced by Century Link while the southern half of the county is mostly serviced by Verizon. Comcast service is mostly along the 322 corridor and Nittany Media service is clustered in Granville and Oliver Townships. The primary reasons the internet connection is not adequate are the speed being too slow and the connection not being reliable. Most households have either 6-10 or 11-20 devices connected to their internet. The primary reasons for using the internet is for accessing the general web and email followed by social media. Entertainment usage accounted for only 15% of usage. This is probably due to the fact that speeds are too slow to be able to view videos and movies. The survey results also showed that most people do not telecommute in Mifflin County. Additional comments and suggestions were provided as a handout. The charts and tables developed from the responses to the survey will be shared with the committee.

Business Survey Results: Previously, 63 responses were received from the business survey that was originally emailed by the Chamber of Commerce. In order to improve this response, Shelly Williamson and Chastity Fultz reviewed the list of businesses obtained from the Assessment Office and the Chamber of Commerce and selected known businesses to send approximately 409 postcards containing the survey link. Based on information we had already received, these postcards focused on areas outside of downtown Lewistown. We have received an additional 39 responses, bringing the total to 100. Chastity reviewed the results of the business survey and will email a copy to the committee.

Laura Simonetti again mapped some of the responses, including an overall map showing where the respondents were located. The majority of the responses came from the Lewistown area. Two other maps showed the adequacy of current and future service. Most businesses felt their current internet service was adequate, but raised concern about adequacy for future service. Chastity noted that duplicate responses were received from a few businesses and these were not able to be removed from the Survey Monkey charts. Approximately 23% of the businesses who responded are home-based and only one business stated that they do not have current internet service. Most respondents use DSL or cable as the primary type of internet connection. The results showed that most businesses have either 2-5 or 6-10 devices connected to their internet service. Connection speeds were also reviewed and some respondents were not sure of their speed. It also appeared that they did not understand the question as to what speed would be desired for their business. Most businesses use the internet to access relevant business information.

Laura asked if cost was an issue and wondered how many residents/businesses do not have adequate internet service due to the high cost. This information was not requested in either the residential or business survey at this time. Kristen Ritchey was not surprised at the results and indicated that this is a positive reflection for the committee. The findings are similar to what we expected to find and reinforces the fact that the committee is on the right track.

Nittany Media Update: Mike Hain announced that Nittany Media will be merging with Zampelli and will offer broadband service in the Zampelli service area starting August 1<sup>st</sup>, including McVeytown and Belleville areas. While Mike wanted to be sure to share this information with the committee before the press release was announced, Lauren Kershner of the Sentinel received the press release earlier in the

day. Mike will be meeting with the FCC later today and is committed to collecting information on the challenge of obtaining pole licenses. Nittany Media will run fiber where it is needed and the new service will be faster. Bill and Chastity asked Mike what speeds Nittany will offer. Mike stated their system overall offers speeds up to 50 mb for current Nittany Media customers, but most people are happy with 12 mb. Customers will have options to choose from.

Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) Application Update: Scott Kramer met with Union County regarding participation in the ARC application along with Mifflin and Juniata. They are very interested and will reach a definite decision within the next week. Lycoming County expressed interest and plan to participate in the application. Snyder County is interested, but would go through the Greater Susquehanna Chamber for participation. If all five counties participate, Scott is hoping for a \$100,000 grant.

School District Survey: Bill has not heard from Doug Cunningham regarding a survey through the school district. Brad Kerstetter has been told that Ben Fausey of the Juniata County School District is in talks with the superintendent and thinks his school district will conduct a survey. Brad asked for a digital copy of the residential survey to share with the school district.

Bill shared that we have spent around \$2,500 in mailings to date, which does not include labor.

Verizon and Comcast Follow-up: A Facebook comment was recently shared with Doug Smith and he has a customer service representative trying to make connection with the resident to resolve the issue. Doug will share with other Verizon officials the competition's plans to offer higher speeds to residents of Mifflin County.

Verizon is continuing to improve the congestion issues in the county. This will open up service for 1,800 – 1,900 customers. Verizon is also working on long-term solutions that will affect 1,200 customers by the end of July. They are still waiting on equipment to wrap up the work efforts on the congestion issues. Currently congestion causes residents to either not be able to access the internet, or to get kicked off once they do get on. Chastity mentioned that some of the complaints against Verizon have to do with residents not being able to get Verizon DSL even when a prior homeowner had the service. She asked if this will be resolved, which Doug said this is part of the congestion relief work being conducted.

Kristen Ritchey stated that Comcast does not have any build out plans at this time, but will be offering a few new products. A device will soon be offered that can monitor Wi-Fi and be able to turn it on and off at the devices. An Internet Essential Program is also offered to students who qualify for free/reduced lunches or live in assisted housing. This will be advertised again as school starts.

Other Business: None

Next Meeting: The next meeting is scheduled for August 16, 2017 at 3:30 p.m.

Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 4:53 p.m.