

MINUTES
MIFFLIN COUNTY INTERNET ADVISORY COMMITTEE
SEPTEMBER 19, 2018
MIFFLIN COUNTY COURTHOUSE, MEETING ROOM B – 3:30 P.M.

ATTENDANCE:

MEMBERS:

Clint Aurand, Armagh Township
Craig Bubb, MABL
Mark VanOuse, Nittany Media
Barb Harer, South Hills
John Rhone, Wayne Township
Michael Tate, GME Communications

OTHERS:

Chastity Fultz, Mifflin County Planning and Development
Bill Gomes, Mifflin County Planning and Development
Brad Kerstetter, Juniata County Planning
Mark Long, Office of Representative Kerry Benninghoff
Robert Postal, Mifflin County Commissioner
Kevin Kodish, Mifflin County Commissioner
Lori Comp, Senator Corman's Office
Scott Kramer, SEDA-COG via teleconference

Call to Order: Bill Gomes called the meeting to order at 3:37 p.m. and reminded everyone to sign the attendance sheet.

Approval of Minutes: Clint Aurand motioned to approve the May meeting minutes. Craig Bubb seconded the motion. All members voted aye.

Committee Update: Since the last meeting in May, Bill has been exploring ways to move this project forward. He has outreached to all providers and asked for more precise maps of service coverage areas. Atlantic Broadband and Comcast have provided some information. He is waiting for information from CenturyLink. Verizon is willing to provide additional information if we provide them another map. Bill is still waiting on a response from Nittany Media. Mark VanOuse asked if Bill was looking for census block information and if other vendors are providing the information Bill is requesting because it is proprietary information. Bill responded that we are looking for information down to actual roads and other providers are providing this information, but added that we will not distribute this information. We cannot provide further assistance without knowing more than we know now. A map of Mifflin County demonstrating where Atlantic Broadband has service in Derry and Decatur Townships was displayed. The map also shows internet service interest based on the 2018 survey. A large gap in coverage still exists in northern parts of Decatur Township, but Atlantic Broadband is not prepared to expand service at this time. Currently, only Verizon and Atlantic Broadband serve Decatur Township.

Bill then pointed out the Comcast service areas in Armagh and Wayne Townships on the map. Comcast provided their consent to display the information of their service area on the map with the committee. The

map was projected on the screen and no hard copies were provided to the committee. Only small pockets of Armagh Township are not covered beyond state forest land. He asked Comcast to review expanding services into Havice Valley. After reviewing this area, however, Comcast determined it would cost \$66,000 to expand in this area, of which \$28,000 would be required to replace poles. Comcast needs assistance with the cost of poles since they have an established limit for costs of expansion. Comcast was also asked to provide detailed maps for Brown, Granville and Derry Townships. Bill likewise sent maps broken down by townships with road names to Nittany Media with no response. He is currently looking at the far areas of the county and working towards the center.

Bill has spoken to one consultant on the phone and met with a second consultant along with two of the Commissioners. The second consultant has since provided a proposal on services that Bill is still reviewing. The consultants will review what the committee has done so far and will help us move forward to the next level to get better service and to find grant assistance. Bill and Rob Postal have also discussed the new USDA pilot program with the USDA representative via teleconference. The County could become the applicant and potentially lease equipment back to providers. Limited discussions have taken place with ARC funding. One of the issues we are facing is that the major players won't share their financial information with grant agencies. The consultant also recommended Bill focus on pockets of the county rather than the county as a whole. It is incredibly important to have all providers help us in order to gain a better picture of where to go from this point.

Scott Kramer of SEDA-COG added that ARC funding requires the end product to benefit a public entity. They do not fund private entities. The USDA has a low interest loan program for the public. Bill noted that many people are interested in the new USDA pilot program involving \$600 million, but everyone is also waiting for guidelines.

Mark VanOuse thought the focus was on census blocks for federal and state funding. Bill has not had census block information come up in his discussions and asked Mark to provide information down to the street level. Mark stressed that they are an older company and have the information in paper form. They are in the process of transferring this information electronically, but it will take months. Bill asked for the old Nittany Media system information, but Mark stated they do not have this electronically. Mark asked Bill to submit an explicit written document of exactly what Bill is looking for and type of electronic format. Bill asked for a timely response from Nittany Media and displayed examples of information we have received from Atlantic Broadband and Comcast. The information from Atlantic Broadband and Comcast was a simple PDF map showing where coverage exists. This information was given to the Mifflin County GIS Department who placed the information onto a township map showing road names. Bill added that CenturyLink also has an issue with sharing proprietary information, but they are willing to work with us. He also noted that the more we know, the better we can look for areas to expand service and negotiate.

Clint Aurand mentioned that Armagh Township and Comcast are up for negotiation of cable franchise fees and wondered if Comcast would expand service for reduced fees. Further discussion with Kristen Ritchey of Comcast will be required for this. Mark VanOuse stated that reducing franchise fees would be an attractive offer, but thinks that most of the municipalities Nittany Media deals with do not charge franchise fees.

Kevin Kodish, Commissioner, mentioned that the blue dots on the map indicate areas where they need improved or other service options. Some of these households may have access to high speed internet, but may feel it is too expensive. Some people do not know what service is available in their area and reliability can be an issue that may factor into responses indicating they need other options. Bill added that the dots on the maps tie back to a specific address and we could verify if there is service available at that address.

Mark Long from Representative Kerry Benninghoff's office questioned the speeds available for satellite services. Mike Tate responded that the data is limited and then throttled once those limits are reached and should be used as a backup or last resort.

Webpage Update: Mike Tate will have a conference call with Bill Gomes and Chastity Fultz to address how to upload meeting minutes to the website. The site can be viewed at <http://mifflincountyiac.org/>.

Other Business: Mark VanOuse shared that Nittany Media is working on completing their service upgrades in the McVeytown area and that the Belleville area is complete.

Bill Gomes spoke to Mark Smith of the governor's office recently and discovered they are still working on the second round of funding with the legislature. He also noted that if the governor changes after elections, work may have to start over.

Next Meeting: The next meeting will be held Wednesday, October 24th due to a scheduling conflict.

Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 4:27 p.m.