

BROADBAND INITIATIVE

MANAGEMENT TEAM MEETING

Friday, September 14, 2007 9:30 – 11:30 a.m.
Eastern Shore Community College, Melfa, VA

ATTENDEES:

Paul Berge, Accomack-Northampton PDC
Jack Bonniwell, Virginia Employment Commission
Harry Brough, Town of Onancock
Reed Ennis, Accomack County
Matt Fitzgerald, DHCD
Katrina Hickman, Town of Onley
Pete Lalor, Resident of Accomack County
Dimitri Plionis, Economist
Robert Ritter, Town of Chincoteague
Barbara Schwenk, Accomack-Northampton PDC
Cheryl Thompson-Stacy, ESCC
Eddie Swain, ESCC

The purpose of the meeting was to review the ten next steps recommended in the completed study (section 9), add any the team thought necessary, and then prioritize them. The second objective was to decide how to implement the next steps. (See attached agenda.)

It was agreed that the steps were already in priority and somewhat chronological order in the study. The chronology is not clear cut as parts of each step need to be addressed simultaneously. Steps 1 through 3 (Request for Interest (RFI), Master Plan, and Business Plan) were identified as critical to moving forward with the Chincoteague/Wallops distribution loop or “spur” off the backbone (whether Maryland or Mid-Atlantic broadband cooperative’s backbone). The team determined that the RFI has to be as open and inclusive to attract as many responses as possible. Also deemed necessary for progress were: law review (franchise?), education of the public as to the importance/uses of broadband for economic development, and the need for a marketing piece to use in educating local officials and the public.

The marketing piece should be a simple diagram to demonstrate the three tiers to broadband access (backbone, distribution loops or spurs, and last mile service provider), and a generic timeline for the backbone and spurs is needed for use with communities and the RFI. The team also discussed the need to expand representation to include localities left out of the planning (Parksley was mentioned), and forming alliances with not-for-profit organizations with the mission of educating the public about the advantages of high-speed broadband access.

The discussion moved to how to organize the next steps and what entity had the staff to do that. The team also suggested that the eventual permanent organization for ownership and management of the distribution loops be regional to cover the whole Eastern Shore. Individual county authorities were viewed as less efficient, and the two counties have historically had

difficulty in working together. At the same time, some level of government needs to be involved in order to instigate funding and construction of the distribution rings.

Barbara Schwenk reported on the types of organizations that own and manage open-access fiber networks in southwest Virginia (handout attached). Creating or recommending a type of organization to eventually own and manage the networks would also be a task of the management team and would probably be an element of the master plan.

The Accomack-Northampton Planning District Commission was identified as the most likely entity to seek funding for and administer planning funds for the RFI, Business Plan, and Master Plan. Matt Fitzgerald indicated that DHCD would probably have funds available to accomplish these steps. Local match would be required.

For approaching towns and counties to request local support and state funding from DHCD to contract for the next steps, it was recommended that a boilerplate resolution be developed along with expectations for local investment. A boilerplate support letter should also be developed for stakeholders (businesses and residents) to use.

MISCELLANEOUS:

1. Wi-Max auction is January 4, 2008

NEXT STEPS:

1. Barbara Schwenk and Paul Berge will prepare boilerplate resolutions and stakeholder letters.
2. Letters will be sent out to Chincoteague/Wallops area businesses requesting that they send letters of support for the project to the A-NPDC and copy the Town of Chincoteague.
3. The Town of Chincoteague will be asked for a resolution of support and a local investment of \$_____.
4. The County of Accomack will be also be asked for a resolution of support and a local investment of \$_____.
5. The A-NPDC will send a letter to DHCD advising its intent to apply for a regional planning grant for completing the first three steps (RFI, Business Plan, and Master Plan) for the Chincoteague/Wallops distribution loop as soon as it has gathered local support (Accomack County, Chincoteague, stakeholders).
6. A simple diagram that shows the three tiers to broadband access will be developed (by whom?)
7. Generic timeline developed for backbone and spurs.
8. Law review by Pete Lalor related to franchises.

NEXT MEETING:

Friday, October 19, 2007 from 9:00 – 11:30 a.m., ESCC Conference Room

Agenda
Broadband Management Team Meeting
Friday, September 14, 2007
9:30 – 11:30 a.m.
Eastern Shore Community College

Action	Method	Time	Who	Notes
Review Agenda and revise as agreed upon	Present/ Discuss/ Agree	5 minutes	Barb Schwenk	
REVIEW AND SELECT NEXT STEPS				
1. Review 10 Next Steps from Study P 114-115	Discuss	15 minutes	Team	
2. Develop additional steps (if necessary)	Brainstorm	10 minutes	Team	
3. Prioritize next steps and select top three to implement first	Vote or assign weight	20 minutes	Team	
IMPLEMENT NEXT STEPS				
4. Develop team/organization to carry out next steps. What are the options or models for ownership/governance?	Present models used in SW Virginia	10 minutes	Barb	
4.a. What recommendations can be made for ownership/governance?	Discuss/Agree	10 minutes	Team	
4.b. Discuss funding possibilities for organization/performance of tasks by others	Discuss/Agree	10 minutes	Matt Fitzgerald & Team	
5. Develop chart of tasks/responsibilities/timelines	Brainstorm/ Volunteers	20 minutes	Team	
6. Wrap Up & Next Steps	Review	5 minutes	Barb	
7. Next Meeting	Discuss/agree	5 minutes	Team	
ADJOURN				

Management Options for Community Telecommunications

Not-for-Profit

Cooperative or others as defined by IRS

Mid-Atlantic Broadband Cooperative (wholesale, backbone)

Lower Shore Broadband Cooperative (retail, last mile)

Cumberland Plateau PDC formed a 501c4 – all profits go to economic development projects only. This PDC has partnered with Lenowisco PDC to build the fiber. Bristol Virginia Utilities provides last mile service and does billing. Also sell point-to-point dedicated access, and they sell no dark fiber.

“Wireless” Authority

Dickenson County Wireless Integrated Network (DCWIN, last mile provider) – allowed under Virginia Code. Their Board of Supervisors initiated it for emergency responders first. Appointed a board from Supervisors, teachers, computer businesses. In one year they picked up more than 300 customers and sell 1.5 Mb download and 120 Kb upload for \$34.95 month (residential, 18 month contract to recover equipment costs). They have three levels of service: residential, business, and commercial. Wireless authorities are not confined to wireless technologies.

Lenowisco PDC – formed authority – use same board members – adjourn PDC board meeting and call authority to order. Owns some fiber (Cumberland Plateau also owns some – not clear on how it is divided) - contracts with last mile provider – Sunset Digital Inc, a public service authority. Have over 200 customers now – school system, call centers, fiber to homes. Used USDA Community Connect funding, Tobacco Commission, EDA, and Coalfields money to build. They have an 80-85% take rate for residential customers in Rose Hill at \$49.95/month. 5 Mb down 256 K up (fiber to home). Creating home based jobs such as medical transcriptionist, truck dispatcher, cottage businesses.

Public Ownership

City of Independence – owns fiber and contracts with last mile provider for all services and town gets broadband for free.