



## **AGENDA**

### **FRANKLIN COUNTY BROADBAND AUTHORITY**

**TUESDAY, MARCH 21, 2023**

**CONFERENCE ROOM B-75**

- 12:00 P.M. Call to Order, Lorie Smith, Broadband Authority Chair
- 12:01 Approval of Authority Minutes – December 20, 2022 and January 17, 2023  
**(Attachment #1)**
- 12:05 VATI Projects Updates
- Shentel (VATI 2021 & VATI 2022)
    - Jessica Wilmer, Manager, Project Management
  - RiverStreet Networks (VATI 2022)
    - Michael Armbrister, AICP, Executive Director, West Piedmont Planning District Commission (WPPDC)
    - Rob Taylor, Director of Business Development & Government Relations, RiverStreet Networks
    - Amanda Cox, External Affairs Manager, American Electric Power (AEP)
- 12:30 Other Updates – Steven Sandy, Assistant County Administrator

Comments of Authority Members

*Adjournment*

*Board of Supervisors Regular Board Meeting to Follow at 1:30 p.m.*

THE FRANKLIN COUNTY BROADBAND AUTHORITY HELD A REGULARLY SCHEDULED MEETING ON TUESDAY, DECEMBER 20, 2022, AT 12:30 P.M., IN ROOM B-75 LOCATED IN THE GOVERNMENT CENTER, 1255 FRANKLIN STREET, ROCKY MOUNT, VIRGINIA.

THERE WERE PRESENT: Mike Carter  
Nick Mitchell  
Ronnie Mitchell  
Lorie Smith – Chair  
Tim Tatum – Vice Chairman

ABSENT Ronnie Thompson  
Tommy Cundiff

OTHERS PRESENT: Christopher Whitlow, County Administrator  
Michael Burnette, Assistant County Administrator  
Steve Sandy, Assistant County Administrator  
Jim Guynn Jr, Legal Counsel  
Madherleyn Torres, Clerk

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Chair Lorie Smith called the meeting to order at 12:47 p.m.  
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**APPOINTMENT OF NICK MITCHELL**

**RESOLUTION #01-12-2022**

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED by the Authority to appoint Nick. Mitchell as a member of the Broadband Authority representing the Snow Creek Election District.

MOTION BY: Tim Tatum  
SECONDED BY: Mike Carter  
VOTING ON THE MOTION WAS AS FOLLOWS:  
AYES: Carter, R. Mitchell, Smith, Tatum  
ABSENT: Cundiff, Thompson

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**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

**RESOLUTION #02-12-2022**

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED by the Authority to approve the September 20, 2022 authority minutes as presented.

MOTION BY: Ronald Mitchell  
SECONDED BY: Tim Tatum  
VOTING ON THE MOTION WAS AS FOLLOWS:  
AYES: Carter, N. Mitchell, R. Mitchell, Smith, Tatum  
ABSENT: Cundiff, Thompson

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**BROADBAND PROJECT UPDATES**  
**STEVE SANDY, ASSISTANT COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR**

Mr. Sandy provided the Authority an update on the status of each of the current broadband projects in the County. He stated that VATI grants are a way of funding projects through funding provided by the State of Virginia. He explained how towers are built and equipment is put on them to put out a wireless signal. He noted that fixed wireless is a more affordable option, but the focus now is on fiber to the home.

Mr. Sandy provided the Authority updates on the projects listed below:

Phase 1, VATI 2020 Grant:

All towers are complete, except the Westlake Tower which is 95% complete. The Westlake Tower is up however Blue Ridge Towers is having issues with AEP getting power. We are working with VA DHCD to close out the project. We have received all reimbursements, but need to do paperwork and get the Westlake Tower over the hump. Verizon will go on the tower in 2023. Seiontec is up to 437 customers now. That number is leveling off. As we get more fiber to houses, fixed wireless will not be needed. We expect it will level off once fiber is available as most people will likely switch over. February 2023 is the current target to finish the project.

Phase 2, VATI 2021 Grant:

Brisnet and Blue Ridge Towers were originally awarded the project. The County re-scoped and obtained additional funding to work with Shentel. Franklin County is providing \$200,000 (20%) in local match funding. The State (VATI) is providing \$1M. These funds are already allocated in the County's capital projects budget. Later in the agenda, we will need to review a new contract with Shentel and the State (DHCD) which we are ready to approve with the Authority's approval. Shentel will build it all, and they will own and operate it. Shentel will ask for reimbursement after everything is connected. Once Shentel gets the approved contract, they can start construction right after the agreements are in place.

Phase 3, VATI 2022 Grant:

Mr. Sandy noted that in 2020 we had ARPA money and set it aside. He stated 7.7M was set aside for Shentel and RiverStreet projects. We did receive state funding for those projects. RiverStreet is delayed because of a partnership with APCo which needs to be approved by the SCC. The General Assembly needs to fully staff the SCC so they can sign off on work AEP has done. The process may take 6 months. He indicated that we cannot move forward until SCC approves because we are attaching to poles owned by AEP, and RiverStreet cannot do its part until APCo does their part first. He suggested asking Ms. Amanda Cox of AEP how we can assist in moving the project forward. Mr. Sandy stated that RiverStreet is fiber to the home, mostly in the Endicott and Snow Creek parts of the county.

Mr. Sandy informed the Authority the other project for 2022 is Shentel which is also a fiber to the home. He noted the project is underway, and Shentel is going through final engineering. Shentel is connecting people through smaller projects. The larger project will be sometime in March 2023. He indicated the Shentel project will be broken up into 30 sub-projects. Completion is anticipated in 24 months, but some people are already getting connected.

Chair Smith said the Authority had talked about posting a schedule to set expectations with constituents. Mr. Sandy stated Shentel will have a more defined schedule and is going to put information on their website that will let people know when service will come to their area. He indicated we will be able to share the information. Chair Smith suggested a link on the county homepage so citizens will not have to look for the information.

Chair Smith asked when APCo will submit their application to the SCC. Mr. Sandy responded it will be January or February. He stated we were able to get pre-engineering with Shentel and RiverStreet, and indicated that without prior authorization we would be about 5 months behind schedule.

Chair Smith asked if citizens have to pay to get connected. Mr. Sandy answered that they typically do not have to pay anything. He stated that if citizens are unable to connect we are able to go through another program with the State called LECAP to get funding. Chair Smith asked if it was competitive. Mr. Sandy answered that the provider can help citizens with the process of getting approval for funding. He stated Shentel tells people about the funding program when they get to \$15,000. He indicated there are financial limitations due to household income.

Mr. Sandy stated we currently have two (2) applications pending for 2023 VATI program. Awards are expected to be announced by the end of the year. He stated some houses had to be left off the 2022 application but in 2023 the program rules changed, and those houses were able to be added to the application. He noted that if we get approved these projects would be combined with our 2022 projects.

Mr. Christopher Whitlow noted that in 2023 the Authority and Board of Supervisors applied for a 2023 VATI grant. He stated we were able to leverage ARPA funding, and if we get approved funds will be needed from the county. He noted we are deploying about \$90 million in fiber connections almost entirely with local and state funds.

Chair Smith asked if there was a local match. Mr. Sandy stated it would be approximately \$1.8 million of local match funding required.

Mr. Sandy provided the Authority with a brief summary and status update on the telecommunication leases. He stated three (3) agreements were signed back in 2020, in addition to a marketing agreement with Blue Ridge Towers where they would market the site for us to bring in a tenant. He stated the operating contract will continue with Seiontec and Blue Ridge Towers has given an indication of four (4) tower leases that are imminent. He stated Verizon is interested in locating at the Henry Community Center. He stated those are four (4) we have draft leases for county location opportunities in 2023. He notes that when we did the grant we received VATI funds to help build towers, and the citizens will be able to see improved cellular service.

Mr. Sandy stated that at the Henry Community Center tower site, Franklin County put in the tower. The agreement is that if the lease is approved, the County and Henry Community Center will split the revenue.

Chair Smith asked if these dollars will go to the General Fund. Mr. Sandy answered that it is something the Authority will have to make a decision on.

Authority member Nick Mitchell stated David Smith has two (2) potential cellular providers going on the tower built by Blue Ridge Towers. Mr. Sandy stated that Mr. Smith will benefit from additional carriers collocating and it will add to the ground lease.

Mr. Sandy told the authority these are the four (4) leases they have almost ready to sign and he hopes to get approval from the Authority today.

Authority member Nick Mitchell asked if the leases are approved today when will they be implemented. Mr. Sandy answered he's been told in the first quarter of 2023. He thinks we will get more providers this year.

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The Authority did not go into a closed meeting.

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**VATI 2021 AGREEMENTS WITH SHENTEL AND VA DHCD**

VATI Project funding initially awarded to Briscnet and Blue Ridge Towers. Project re-scoped with Shentel to provide wireline project rather than a fixed wireless project. Agreements with Shentel and DHCD are ready to be approved by the Authority. Once these items are, Shentel can be released to begin construction to provide wireline service to 612 additional premises in the County. VATI is providing \$939,500 in grant funding for this project. Franklin County is providing \$200,000 in local matching funds. These funds are already allocated under the County's broadband capital account.

Chair Smith asked the Authority if they needed any clarification on the leases. Authority members did not need clarification.

**(RESOLUTION #03-12-2022)**

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED by the Authority to APPROVE the VATI 2021 grant agreements with Shentel and VA DHCD and authorize the Authority Chair and County Attorney to sign the necessary documents to execute these agreements on behalf of Franklin County.

MOTION BY: Ronald Mitchell  
SECONDED BY: Tim Tatum  
VOTING ON THE MOTION WAS AS FOLLOWS:  
AYES: Carter, N. Mitchell, R. Mitchell, Smith, Tatum  
ABSENT: Cundiff, Thompson

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**TELECOMMUNICATION LEASES**

As part of the VATI 2020 grant project, the County used VATI funds to construct several new towers (Callaway, Fork Mtn., Glade Hill, Henry, Snow Creek, Sontag) to create a fixed wireless network for initial broadband deployment. In addition, the County entered into a marketing agreement with Blue Ridge Towers to market these tower sites to cellular providers for colocation opportunities. These colocation opportunities offer the benefit of increased cellular services in these areas as well as additional revenue from lease opportunities. Blue Ridge Towers has received several referrals and inquiries for colocation from providers like Verizon, US Cellular and T-Mobile. The County has received a letter of intent to collocate on the Henry tower site and expect additional letters of intent for the Sontag and Snow Creek sites in very near future. Each of these colocation opportunities will require leases that will need to be approved by the Broadband Authority.

Chair Smith asked if there was a lease agreement to review. Mr. Sandy stated it was in the Friday Packet. He indicated the leases are standard. He stated there is an escalation clause included in the agreement for a 5-year increase to 10% not an increase of 2% each year.

**(RESOLUTION #04-12-2022)**

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED by the Authority to APPROVE the presented telecommunication leases for the Henry and Sontag tower sites (and others as discussed) and authorize the County Administrator, Authority Chair and County Attorney to sign the necessary documents to execute these agreements on behalf of Franklin County.

MOTION BY: Tim Tatum  
SECONDED BY: Ronald Mitchell  
VOTING ON THE MOTION WAS AS FOLLOWS:  
AYES: Carter, N. Mitchell, R. Mitchell, Smith, Tatum  
ABSENT: Cundiff, Thompson

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**Comments Of Authority Members**

Authority member Ronald Mitchell told Staff to keep up the good work.

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**MOTION TO ADJOURN**

**(RESOLUTION #05-12-2022)**

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED by the Authority to adjourn the meeting at 1:19 p.m.

MOTION BY: Tim Tatum  
SECONDED BY: Ronald Mitchell  
VOTING ON THE MOTION WAS AS FOLLOWS:  
AYES: Carter, N. Mitchell, R. Mitchell, Smith, Tatum  
ABSENT: Cundiff, Thompson

*Chair Smith adjourned the meeting to the Board of Supervisors meeting at 1:30 p.m.*

THE FRANKLIN COUNTY BROADBAND AUTHORITY HELD A REGULARLY SCHEDULED MEETING ON TUESDAY, JANUARY 17, 2023 AT 12:30 P.M., IN ROOM B-75 LOCATED IN THE GOVERNMENT CENTER, 1255 FRANKLIN STREET, ROCKY MOUNT, VIRGINIA.

THERE WERE PRESENT:           Nick Mitchell  
  Ronnie Mitchell  
  Lorie Smith  
  Tim Tatum  
  Ronnie Thompson  
  Tommy Cundiff

ABSENT                             Mike Carter

OTHERS PRESENT:               Christopher Whitlow, County Administrator  
  Michael Burnette, Assistant County Administrator  
  Steve Sandy, Assistant County Administrator  
  Jim Guynn Jr, Legal Counsel  
  Matherleyn Torres, Clerk

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Mr. Christopher Whitlow, County Administrator, called the meeting to order.

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**CHAIRPERSON NOMINATIONS**

Mr. Christopher Whitlow, County Administrator, opened the floor for nominations of 2023 Authority Chairperson.

Lorie Smith      Nominated by: Tim Tatum and Ronald Mitchell

**RESOLUTION #01-01-2023**

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED by the Authority to close the floor for nominations of 2023 Authority Chairperson.

MOTION BY:                    Tim Tatum  
SECONDED BY:                 Ronald Mitchell  
VOTING ON THE MOTION WAS AS FOLLOWS:  
AYES: Cundiff, N. Mitchell, R. Mitchell, Smith, Tatum, Thompson  
ABSENT: Carter

**RESOLUTION #02-01-2023**

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED by the Authority to elect Mrs. Lorie Smith as 2023 Chair of the Broadband Authority.

MOTION BY:                    Tim Tatum  
SECONDED BY:                 Ronald Mitchell  
VOTING ON THE MOTION WAS AS FOLLOWS:  
AYES: Cundiff, N. Mitchell, R. Mitchell, Smith, Tatum, Thompson  
ABSENT: Carter

\*\* Roll call vote was taken \*\*

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## **VICE-CHAIRPERSON NOMINATIONS**

Chair Smith opened the floor for nominations for 2023 Vice-Chairperson.

Mike Carter                      Nominated by: Tim Tatum and Nick Mitchell

### **RESOLUTION #03-01-2023**

**BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED** by the Authority to close the floor for nominations of 2023 Authority Vice-Chairperson.

MOTION BY:                      Tim Tatum  
SECONDED BY:                  Tommy Cundiff  
VOTING ON THE MOTION WAS AS FOLLOWS:  
AYES: Cundiff, N. Mitchell, R. Mitchell, Smith, Tatum, Thompson  
ABSENT: Carter

### **RESOLUTION #04-01-2023**

**BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED** by the Authority to elect Mr. Mike Carter as 2023 Vice-Chairperson of the Broadband Authority.

MOTION BY:                      Tim Tatum  
SECONDED BY:                  Nick Mitchell  
VOTING ON THE MOTION WAS AS FOLLOWS:  
AYES: Cundiff, N. Mitchell, R. Mitchell, Smith, Tatum, Thompson  
ABSENT: Carter

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## **BROADBAND PROJECT UPDATES**

**STEVE SANDY – ASSISTANT COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR**

Mr. Sandy provided the Authority updates on the broadband projects. He informed the Authority that he is working on four (4) leases on existing county sites.

Mr. Sandy stated he met with Mr. Anthony Smith of Blue Ridge Towers at the Westlake Tower site. The tower still needs power. Mr. Smith is working with Rock Outdoors to get power to the tower. Mr. Smith signed the documents and is waiting on AEP to finish the work. Mr. Smith has a few trees to plant and stumps to burn, which should be done late this week or early next week. Rock Outdoors has provided Mr. Smith permission. Mr. Sandy informed the Authority that once the Westlake tower is completed the VATI 2020 grant can be closed. He stated Verizon will be installing its equipment on the top of the Westlake tower this spring.

Mr. Sandy stated the 2021 Shentel contract was signed today; the project will be underway. This project will serve 500-600 homes. He stated that much of the engineering is done allowing Shentel to start the project quickly.

Mr. Sandy stated there has been a design change on the 2022 VATI grant. Shentel has started small parts of the project and is expected to begin a larger expansion once the engineering is done.

Mr. Sandy stated RiverStreet is waiting on engineering, and on APCo which require SCC approval before they can begin work. He informed the Authority that a letter has been sent to the General Assembly asking them to make appointments to the SCC.

Mr. Sandy stated no information has been received on the 2023 VATI award notification. He informed the Authority the Broadband Authority Council has a meeting scheduled on Friday, he hopes something will come out of the meeting. He will inform the Authority once we receive a notification.

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**COMMENTS OF AUTHORITY MEMBERS**

Authority member Ronald Mitchell asked about leases. Mr. Sandy stated they are reviewing leases on the Snow Creek and Sontag tower sites; Verizon on Snow Creek and US Cellular on Sontag. He indicated Verizon seems confident but is not sure yet about US Cellular. He believes it will happen but it may be a matter of timing.

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**MOTION TO ADJOURN**

**(RESOLUTION #05-01-2023)**

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED by the Authority to adjourn the meeting at 1:24 p.m.

MOTION BY: Ronald Mitchell  
SECONDED BY: Tim Tatum  
VOTING ON THE MOTION WAS AS FOLLOWS:  
AYES: Cundiff, N. Mitchell, R. Mitchell, Smith, Tatum, Thompson  
ABSENT: Carter

*Chair Smith adjourned the meeting to the Board of Supervisors meeting at 1:30 p.m.*