

VIRGINIA: AT A WORKSHOP MEETING OF THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS HELD IN THE POWHATAN VILLAGE BUILDING AUDITORIUM, 3910 OLD BUCKINGHAM ROAD IN POWHATAN COUNTY, VIRGINIA, AND REMOTELY BY ELECTRONIC MEANS ON MARCH 23, 2021, AT 6:30 P.M.

Board of Supervisors Present: David T. Williams, District 1,
Michael W. Byerly, District 3, Vice Chairman
Bill L. Cox, District 4
Karin M. Carmack, District 5, Chairman

Board of Supervisors Absent: None

County Staff Present: Ned Smither, County Administrator
Bret Schardein, Deputy County Administrator
John Wood, Director of Information Technology

Constitutional Officers Present: Brad Nunnally, Sheriff

Guests Present: Gary Wood, Firefly, President and CEO
Evan Weiner, Hosted Backbone, Manager

1. Call to Order

Chairman Carmack called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

- a. Identify Public Entity members physically and/or electronically present

Mrs. Carmack identified the Board members, Mr. Smither, and their locations.

- b. Identify the persons responsible for receiving public comment

County Administration staff will accept emailed comments at administration@powhatanva.gov. Any comments received until 6:30 pm, on the day of the meeting will be entered into the meeting minutes.

- c. Identify opportunities for the public to access the electronic meeting

The public was able to participate in the meeting by using: <https://zoom.us/j/398095011> by computer. Phone access was possible by dialing: US: 1-929-205-6099 or 1-312-626-6799. As always, the public could view the live feed from the County website.

- d. Identify opportunities for the public to participate in such an electronic meeting

The public was able to view and participate in the meeting live with the Zoom meeting link. During the public comment period, members of the public could raise their hands using the zoom controls on their screens, or press *9 on their phone.

2. Pledge of Allegiance

Mr. Cox led the Pledge of Allegiance

3. Invocation

Mr. Williams led the Invocation

4. Requests to Postpone Agenda Items and Additions, Deletions or Changes in the Order of Presentation

None

5. Formal Approval of Agenda

Chairman Carmack made a motion to approve the agenda as presented. Mr. Williams seconded the motion.

David T. Williams, Michael W. Byerly, Bill L. Cox, Karin M. Carmack voted AYE

VOTE 4-0
MOTION Passed

6. New Business

- a. Broadband Discussion

Mrs. Carmack opened the discussion with a statement. She stated that the Board has been focused on providing all of Powhatan with high-speed internet service. They have worked closely with our private sector partners in an attempt to provide broadband to underserved areas throughout the county. She stated that they still have more areas throughout the County that need a solution. She said that they are proud of the Boards accomplishments this past year utilizing Federal CARES Act funding to install twenty-two miles of fiber to neighborhoods throughout the County. The entire installation was completed within 3 ½ months in compliance with the Federal guidelines. She stated that over the next few months, Hosted Backbone, through their affiliate Port 80, will be connecting home owners to the new fiber and broadband service. In addition, our Board has worked closely with Firefly to provide service to the western part of the County. Firefly has led the County's efforts to obtain Federal grant funding for over 1500 homes in western Powhatan. Mrs. Carmack then introduced Mr. John Wood.

Mr. John Wood presented a set of PowerPoint slides.

1. The first slide went over the problem areas.
2. The second slide explained what small projects the County had done.
3. The third slide showed the long-term projects yet to be completed. Hosted Backbone has 2 projects totaling \$863,000. That would bring service to 407 homes. Comcast will have 1 project for \$80,000 that will bring service to eight homes. The County is currently exploring another project with Comcast in hopes of getting service to 108 homes for about \$870,000. Firefly had \$1.76 million awarded to them for 1,300 homes. There will possibly be funding for expanding that project through grants and funding.
4. The fourth slide showed a map PCPS made with the survey. The map showed homes that didn't have internet access.

1. Firefly

Mr. Gary Wood, President and CEO, presented a PowerPoint slide.

1. The first slide introduced his colleagues, and went over some information about the Company.
2. The second slide went over the all the projects for Powhatan County. He stated that he would like to propose a partnership with the County to provide universal service to all unserved areas.
3. The third slide showed a map of the County. The map was highlighted in areas that the Federal government would consider underserved.
4. The fourth slide showed Plan A. He explained that the only way Plan A works is if we are approved for the USDA ReConnect Grant. Other funding will include FCC Rural Digital Opportunity Fund, CARES, Federal Infrastructure, and Virginia Telecommunications Initiative.
5. The fifth slide is Plan B. If the USDA Grant doesn't go through, we will need to look at reducing cost, building underground, and discuss a partnership with Dominion to address 300 homes in the northern part of the County.
6. The sixth slide explains a partnership with Dominion. This project is regional and goes across central Virginia. The idea is that Dominion will build out the "middle mile" and Firefly would make the connections. Mr. Wood explained that in order to do this, Powhatan County and Firefly would have to enter into a partnership.
7. The seventh slide shows a timeline of Plan A and Plan B. Plan A can start this Fall. Plan B will wrap up in 2022 and 2023.

Mrs. Carmack asked if we can get moving with the FCC Grant money. Mr. Wood explained that the money for that Grant is given over a period of 10 years, so there wouldn't be enough money to start. Mrs. Carmack then asked, for the folks with very long driveways, are Firefly looking to service those. Mr. Wood replied that Firefly will go the first 1,000 feet, then the customer pays per foot.

Mr. Williams, Mr. Cox, and Mr. Wood discussed the grants and what they entailed.

2. Hosted Backbone

Mr. Evan Weiner presented. He noted that he is in partnership with Port 80. He explained that in Fall of 2020, Hosted Backbone started a project that would bring 400 homes service over 20 miles. He explained the two phases of the project, and they wrapped up in February on this year. He stated that they still have about 20-30 homes to hook up to the fiber. He added that so far, they have brought 34% of the requested service area online.

Mrs. Carmack asked what his take rates to be. Mr. Weiner explained that in some places, it's close to but not quite 100%.

Mrs. Carmack asked both companies to have the maps they provided on the County website for residents.

b. Question and Answer Session

Mr. Steven Hanoka, 3581 Pineview Dr, asked if Firefly and Hosted Backbone are able to expand internet to folks that are past the cut-off line in another companies' area. Mrs. Carmack responded by saying that she would look into this. You may see Mr. Hanoka's comments on the Powhatan County YouTube channel at the 59:25-minute mark.

Mr. Mark Johnson, 4943 Old Buckingham Rd, asked if the Army Corps could help in labor and funding these projects. Mr. Wood responded by saying that he'd never heard of this before. Mr. Johnson then asked the Board if there's anything that they can do to influence the USDA's decision. Mrs. Carmack replied that they have tried multiple different ways. Mr. Johnson then asked if there's anything that homeowners can do to help cut the cost for the internet companies. Mr. Wood responded by saying that the homeowners can put in a conduit. Mr. Weiner thinks that their involvement may do more harm than good. You may see Mr. Johnson's comments in full on the Powhatan County YouTube channel at the 1:01:15 mark.

A participant on Zoom asked how would underground fiber installations be handled in areas with underground power. Mr. Wood stated that they would follow the lines. To see the full response, please visit the Powhatan County YouTube channel. The Zoom question can be seen at the 1:11:28 minute mark.

7. County Attorney Comments

None

8. County Administrator Comments

Mr. Smither thanked Mr. John Wood for all that he has done.

9. Board Comments

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Mr. Cox stated that while getting internet to the County is a daunting task, it's also very exciting to see so many barriers moving. Mr. Cox thanked Firefly and Hosted Backbone for all of their efforts.

Mr. Byerly thanked Hosted Backbone and Firefly. He stated that he's hearing that the Board hasn't done anything for Broadband. He stated that this Board is doing something for Broadband. Mr. Byerly also thanked the Board and Mr. Smither for making these tough decisions.

Mrs. Carmack thanked Firefly and Hosted Backbone. She added that Broadband is a priority.

10. Adjournment

Chairman Carmack adjourned the meeting at 7:50 pm

These minutes were approved on November 22, 2021, with a motion, second, and 5/0 vote.



Ned Smither, Clerk
Powhatan County Board of Supervisors



Karin M. Carmack, Chairman
Powhatan County Board of Supervisors

<i>David T. Williams</i>	AYE
<i>Steve W. McClung</i>	AYE
<i>Michael W. Byerly</i>	AYE
<i>Bill L. Cox</i>	AYE
<i>Karin M. Carmack</i>	AYE

MLW