

## Queen Anne's Broadband Advisory Committee (BAC)

Meeting Notes | June 22, 2018

In attendance:

- BAC: Megan GelGaudio, Alison Davis, Ben Schaffle, Jacob Wargotz
- Jonathan Seeman, QAC Director of Budget, Finance and IT
- Reps from Atlantic Broadband, ABB (Scott Randall, William Scott Hoffman-Rhoades, ) and DelMarva WiFi (John Woodfield)

The BAC is working to access the potential of broadband access to advance the future of QAC, focusing first on meeting the needs of QAC residents who are unserved and underserved with respect to broadband access.

A “patchwork” approach to “stitch” together broadband access to all QAC residents will likely involve several components (multiple providers offering different types of services). The BAC will work to ensure that providers work cooperatively.

Despite the BAC recognizing this issue as a high priority for the county, serving all residents will take time. Influential factors include customer demand and density, regional topography and geographic technical limitations, and county financial co-support.

The BAC should communicate to the public that a variety of broadband options are available to serve customers (residents or businesses) based up the technical needs of each customer.

*Note: BAC considers broadband according to FCC guidelines: 25 Mbps download/3 Mbps upload (25 Mbps/3 Mbps).*

ABB

- Fiber-based speed is 120 Mbps/10 Mbps
- Suggests a cooperative, interactive approach between ABB, BAC, and QAC residents Noted that specific proposals and deals with the county would require ABB and BAC meeting in executive session.
- Reported that they fully funded coverage to John Brown Rd last year (80 homes) last year
- Noted that as a corporate entity they require a financial incentive to invest in any area, but that they constantly review their budget to extend coverage
- Has at least two “shovel-ready” broadband projects and wishes to discuss a partnership with QAC
- Provides fiber to residences with  $\leq 300$  feet access to home

Delmarva WiFi

- Fixed wireless-based speed is 25 Mbps/3 Mbps, although tree cover tower height hosting antennae can dramatically reduce this speed to <2-3 Mbps/1-2 Mbps
  - Provides mostly last-mile fixed WiFi and some fiber services throughout the region, including neighboring counties.
  - Provides discounted service for low-income customers
  - Requests attachment of equipment to 4 county water towers (non-exclusive) to extend service to more county residents (will enable them to reach 95% coverage throughout QAC)
  - Can provide QAC residents access through towers in other counties, given adequate line-of-sight (e.g. Rock Hall tower in Kent County can serve some north QAC residents)
- **ACTION: The BAC members voted to recommend to the QAC commissioners approval to allow Delmarva Wifi to connect to four QAC water towers located at Matapeake Business Park, Castle Marina, Prospect Bay, and the Chesapeake Bay Business Park.**

#### Other towers:

- Current policies prohibit co-location of provider equipment on towers with emergency-services equipment
- The BAC should consider leasing space on additional QAC towers (4H park, Shine Smith Rd, WRNR), pending provider-supported structural assessments to determine feasibility.
- The BAC could consider building or enabling building of additional towers to support more providers

#### QAC funds available for broadband projects

- Will likely come from technology-based franchise-fee payments, which will increase with increased customer base
- State and federal grants are limited to non-existent based upon restrictions (resident-based service is lowest priority compared to local government structures and entities such as schools, libraries, emergency services etc)
- Inevitably, QAC-provider public-private partnerships to expand broadband access will occur in “bites” and “nibbles” based upon the availability of funds (both corporate investment and county funds)
- QAC will require providers to commit to out-year maintenance

#### Broadband coverage map

- Current coverage map (ABB-based) sent by BAC to potential providers is limited in part because it was survey-based and only identifies served customers not potential customers
- Need more granularity and layered fixed wireless capability
- Add GIS layer (QAC)

- Main point is to have accurate data to understand current capability, not actual coverage

## **ACTION ITEMS**

- ACTION: BAC will work with ABB and QAC resources, and other data available, to build a more accurate, scalable, high-resolution broadband-access map that identifies areas that are served (and how), underserved, and unserved. The map will identify those addresses with driveways/access  $\geq 300$  feet (as these will require alternative strategies if they are in highly wooded areas not accessible by fixed-wireless solutions).
- ACTION: The BAC will request from the QAC commissioners counsel on creating a legal process to implement its recommendations.
- ACTION: Schedule executive-session meeting with ABB( between July 9 and July 13) to discuss details of shovel-ready projects and costs, toward presenting recommendations to the QAC commissioners for near-term implementation of these projects to serve un- or underserved QAC residents.
- ACTION: The BAC will reach out to those providers (Cambio, BridgeMaxx, Wide-Open Networks) who did not attend the June 21 meeting, but submitted responses to the BAC questionnaire, to engage in face-to-face discussions about their potential contributions to expanding QAC broadband access.