



112 MacTanly Place  
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**Bath-Highland Network Authority  
Organizational Meeting  
Monday, April 8<sup>th</sup>, 2019, at 1pm**

Bolar Ruritan Club  
Bolar Ln, Monterey, VA 24465

Authority Members in attendance:	Organization
Ashton Harrison	Bath County
Ronald Wimer	Town of Monterey
David Blanchard	Highland County
Nancy Witschey	Highland County
Richard Byrd	Bath County
Others in attendance:	Organization
Robbie Huff	MGW
Mike Bollinger	The Recorder
Chris Martin	Burnsville Property Owner
Mrs. Martin	Burnsville Property Owner
Hunter Moore	CSPDC

**Call to Order**

The meeting of the Bath-Highland Network Authority was called to order at 1:05 PM by Mr. Ashton Harrison.

**Welcome and Introductions**

Attendants at the table introduced themselves and binders were distributed to Authority members.

**Public Comment**

There were no public comments.

**Bylaws Review**

Mr. Harrison asked the Authority members if they had any changes to the draft bylaws. Mr. Harrison suggested that the starting year of the Authority members' terms be added. It was determined that this start date would be January 2018.



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Ms. Hunter Moore will edit the bylaws and the Authority can approve the bylaws at the next meeting in July. Discussion ensued about using Robert's Rules for the bylaws, and Mr. Harrison concluded that the bylaws can be amended at anytime if needed.

### **Legal Services**

Mr. Harrison explained that Mr. Jordan Bowman of Litten & Sipe sent a letter to the Authority about their legal services, rates and representing the Authority in the future. Authority members discussed the letter and their options and decided to ask Mr. Bowman for an official proposal.

### **Burnsville Community Broadband Discussion**

Mr. Chris Martin and his wife joined the meeting and introduced themselves. Mr. Martin explained to the Authority that he and his wife bought property in Burnsville so that they could be closer to his wife's family; however, they are unable to get highspeed internet at their property in Burnsville. Mr. Martin discussed the possibility of building his own fiber network to provide internet access for himself and surrounding neighbors. Mr. Martin asked if getting permits and easements are the biggest hurdle? Mr. Robbie Huff of MGW explained that attaining easements are a major factor and a project cannot start without them. Mr. Richard Byrd expressed that Mr. Martin would have to go through the same process as MGW to obtain permits and easements and would need to become a business or provider regulated by the State Corporation Commission; otherwise, it would be illegal. Mr. Byrd suggested that Mr. Martin contact his county supervisor, Stuart Hall. Discussion ensued on alternate options for Mr. Martin and the Burnsville Community. Mr. Ashton Harrison explained the funding situation for the Authority, and that the Authority could own fiber but do not want to be the provider. Mr. David Blanchard voiced that the BHNA acts as a conduit for funding for providers in their area. Ms. Nancy Witschey asked if wireless internet would be an option for Mr. Martin. Mr. Huff answered no, due to the topography issue. Mr. Martin expressed that he could trench the fiber on his property himself, donate the fiber or sell to neighbors at cost. Mr. Huff explained he did not think this idea was reasonable. Discussion followed and concluded with Mr. Huff offering to see how MGW can help the Burnsville community with their broadband issue.

A comment was made about finding the correct address of the Bolar Ruritan Club. Mr. Ronald Wimer said he would locate the address for building so we would have the correct address for future meetings.

### **Provider Updates**

Mr. Harrison asked for Mr. Huff to give an update on MGW activities. Mr. Huff discussed several projects, such as an extension of the fiber network from McDowell north to the Doe Hill area, and speed updates to the Fort Lewis and Mill Creek areas. Ms. Witschey asked if MGW was providing fiber to the home in the McDowell area, and Mr. Huff answered no, not yet. In Highland County, high-speed internet is available to locations in the areas of McDowell, Headwaters, and along Bullpasture River Road and Cowpasture River Road.

Ms. Witschey asked for more information on the new cell tower going up in Bath County. Mr. Byrd and Mr. Harrison explained that the 299 ft tower has approved and would hopefully cover the area from Monterey to Warm Springs for cell service. The tower construction will be completed by APEX.

### **Funding Opportunities Update**

Mr. Harrison gave an update on USDA's Re-Connect program and shared that applications for this funding opens on April 23<sup>rd</sup>. Mr. Harrison suggested that the Authority send out a letter to all the Providers in the BHNA area to notify them about



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this funding opportunity and encourage them to apply. The letter can also let providers know that the BHNA meets regularly and are welcome to attend BHNA meetings. Ms. Moore offered to draft this letter for the Providers.

Ms. Moore provided a handout on current funding opportunities including Virginia's Department of Housing and Community Development's VATI program and CBDG Planning grants. The handout also included information on USDA's Re-Connect program and ARC's POWER grants. Ms. Witschey asked if there are any grants for cellular service. Discussion followed about the need for cellular service in the Bath – Highland area. Ms. Moore concluded that she will look for grants that include funding for cellular service.

### **Next Steps**

Mr. Harrison discussed the Authority's board insurance and suggested to add this to the agenda for the next meeting. The Authority summarized the individual tasks needed before the next meeting. The Authority then decided to approve the minutes from the last meeting.

Mr. Harrison moved, seconded by Mr. Byrd, to approve the minutes from the January 10<sup>th</sup> BHNA meeting. Motion carried unanimously.

### **Adjournment**

Mr. Harrison moved, seconded by Mr. Blanchard, to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried unanimously.

There being no further discussion, the BHNA meeting concluded at 3:30 PM. The next meeting will be held at the Bolar Ruritan Club on Monday, July 8th, 2019 at 1 PM.