

Clarke County

PLANNING COMMISSION TELECOMMUNICATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES TUESDAY, JANUARY 3, 2017



A meeting of the Planning Commission Telecommunications Subcommittee was held at the Berryville/Clarke County Government Center, Berryville, Virginia, on Tuesday, January 3, 2017 at 4:00PM.

ATTENDANCE

Members Present: Robina Bouffault, Douglas Kruhm, and Jon Turkel

Members Absent: None

Staff Present: Brandon Stidham, Planning Director

Other Participants: George L. Ohrstrom, II; Mary Daniel; Anne Caldwell

AGENDA

Mr. Turkel moved to approve the agenda as presented, seconded by Mr. Kruhm. All voted AYE.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. Turkel noted on page 3 of 52 that the “p”s should be shown as capital “P” or lower-case “p” as referenced. Ms. Bouffault noted on page 5 of 52, bottom line of first paragraph, that she did not say that Mr. Stidham’s comments addressed her concerns. Mr. Stidham recommended striking all wording after “applicants” in that line and Ms. Bouffault agreed.

Ms. Bouffault moved to approve the November 14, 2016 minutes as amended, seconded by Mr. Turkel. All voted AYE.

DISCUSSION – REVISED DRAFT MONOPOLE TEXT AMENDMENT

Mr. Stidham said that the revised draft provided by Staff includes comments provided by the members and Staff’s changes to reconcile the draft with the Telecommunications Infrastructure & Broadband Study recommendations. He noted that this version incorporates all previously discussed changes in black italicized font and shows all new changes in red italicized font. He stated that it is rather lengthy set of changes and was unsure whether the members had sufficient time to review the document in detail.

Mr. Ohrstrom said that he discussed this with Mr. Stidham and Ms. Bouffault prior to the meeting. He said that even though the Board of Supervisors has requested the Commission and Subcommittee to use the Study as the basis for the text amendment, he did not think it would be a problem to use

other sources of relevant information as well. Mr. Turkel asked whether the Board directed the Commission to use the Study exclusively as the basis. Mr. Ohrstrom said that he thought the Board would allow some latitude to consider other information in developing the text amendment. Ms. Bouffault stated that she did not think the Board was fully aware of all the aspects of the Subcommittee's work. Ms. Daniel said there is continuing discussion of how the Study is to be used and added that it was not commissioned to be an end-all-be-all source on telecommunications and broadband. She added that it is about how all entities in the County can facilitate the commerce of it. Ms. Bouffault said that she agrees with Ms. Daniel and on Friday would like to talk more with the Commission about the public expectations of what the County is doing in this effort and the components of the issue that are not contained within the scope of the ordinance. She said there should be an informational component that is recommended to the Board to advise the public of the options that are available. Ms. Daniel said that getting information to the public is a challenge when you do not have a County newspaper and that the provider information can be conveyed through the County website. Ms. Bouffault said that she will be bringing an updated chart of 15 providers to the Commission meeting. Ms. Daniel said that the Board hired a consultant to provide an expert opinion on the subject and that if the Commission wants to recommend something outside of the consultant's Study to be prepared to say why it is necessary and where it came from. Mr. Turkel said there is the issue of the Subcommittee's scope of work versus the broadband availability expectation and added that there is overlap of topics but also a separation – "telecommunications" and "broadband" are not synonymous. Mr. Ohrstrom said that the public probably has the misunderstanding that if you have taller towers you automatically have better broadband. He added that we are a small county and do not have the resources to provide broadband access to everyone. Mr. Turkel added that we need to get out of the way as much as we can. Ms. Daniel also said that there is confusion that broadband is not a utility and that the County does not have much say regarding what degree the service is provided.

Ms. Caldwell suggested that the Clarke Observer could be a resource to notify the public since it is mailed to every household. She added that to ensure the information is provided, the County could consider paying for it to be included. Ms. Bouffault replied that this was a good idea. She added that most people will not go to the County website to learn about broadband options and that the County has to inform citizens of the options. She said that this is not part of the scope of what the Planning Commission does and thinks it is a perfect project for the Board of Supervisors to undertake. Ms. Daniel said that this would play into the Request for Information process. Ms. Bouffault said that the more proactive the County can be to get this information out to the public, the better off we will be.

Mr. Stidham asked about scheduling for the next Subcommittee meeting. Consensus was to meet before the next Briefing Meeting on Tuesday, January 24 at 4:00PM.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:18PM.



Brandon Stidham, Planning Director