

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS  
FOR SOMERSET COUNTY  
SPECIAL SESSION  
TUESDAY DECEMBER 1, 2020

At 2:23 p.m., the Board of Somerset County Commissioners met in Special Session with Commissioner President Craig Mathies, Sr., Commissioner Vice President Charles Laird, Commissioner Randy Laird, Commissioner Eldon Willing, and Commissioner Rex Simpkins on a motion made by Vice President Charles Laird and seconded by Commissioner Willing that carried 5-0.

Also in attendance were County Administrator-Clerk Ralph D. Taylor and Executive Secretary Kimberly Lopez.

**Closed Session Summary Report for December 1, 2020**

On December 1, 2020, from 3:32 p.m. until 4:11 p.m., at 11916 Somerset Avenue, Room 111, upon a motion made by Commissioner Simpkins and seconded by Commissioner Willing, it carried 5-0 to enter into Closed Session by Authority of State Government Article of the Annotated Code of Maryland, Subtitle §3-305 (b) (1) the appointment, employment, assignment, promotion, discipline, demotion, compensation, removal, resignation, or performance evaluation of an appointee, employee, or official over whom it has jurisdiction.

Present for the Closed Session Meeting were President Craig N. Mathies, Sr., Vice President Charles Laird, Commissioner Randy Laird, Commissioner Rex Simpkins, and Commissioner Eldon Willing. Also present were County Administrator Ralph D. Taylor, Executive Secretary Kimberly Lopez, Director of Solid Waste and Maintenance Charles Cavanaugh, Director of Human Resources Morena Corbin. Topics discussed were: (1) Personnel; Actions taken: Promotion, Hiring

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The meeting began with a virtual presentation for Rural Broadband by Mr. Ziggy Rivkin-Fish. Virtually present for the meeting were: Rashiek Whitlow, Jenna Schmalijohn, Paul Carliner, Andre DeMattia, Chris Comer, Danny Thompson, Eric Collins, Matt Shiffermiller, Matt Tefteau, Tim McGaha, V. Sabathies, and Valerie Connelly. Mr. Chris Woodward, Director of IT, Mr. Gary Pusey, Director of DTCS, and Mr. John Redden, County Engineer, were physically present for the meeting.

Mr. Rivkin-Fish presented a PowerPoint of the County's Broadband Assessment Study, advising of their findings and recent developments:

- Category 1 - no wireline broadband, Category 2 - small unserved areas within the served areas, Category 3 – areas considered “served” based on current definitions cannot get service due to the dwelling distance from the road.
- Fixed wireless providers claim service covering the entire County; however, the County prefers pursuing “future-proof” solutions such as fiber first.
- Choptank, ThinkBig, Talkie, and Bloosurf are all willing partners.
- FCC fast-tracked its RDOF auction, making \$16B available for 10 years of support in Phase I (with an additional \$4.6B or more in the future).
- Final eligible areas only slightly diminished from initially eligible ones (good conditions for competition between ISPs, even without Choptank participation), MD Rural Broadband Coop fiber in County allows providers to “leapfrog” into County from other areas where they have existing network presence, can also serve as partial backbone in the County from where distribution fiber branches off.

At the conclusion of Mr. Rivkin-Fish’s presentation, Mr. Woodward advised to the virtual participants to direct any further questions to him via email. President Mathies presented the question to Mr. Rivkin-Fish on what was in the best interest of the residents (wireless or fiber) considering longevity and investment in infrastructure. Mr. Rivkin-Fish advised that fiber would be the best. Grant opportunities were then discussed before the Board thanked Mr. Rivkin-Fish for his presentation and the virtual meeting came to an end.

The Board was advised for the need of a Closed Session.


Therefore, on a motion made by Commissioner Simpkins and seconded by Vice President Charles Laird that carried 5-0, the Board entered into Closed Session by Authority of State Government Article of the Annotated Code of Maryland, Subtitle §3-305 (b) (1) the appointment, employment, assignment, promotion, discipline, demotion, compensation, removal, resignation, or performance evaluation of an appointee, employee, or official over whom it has jurisdiction at 3:32 p.m.

Approved by:



Board of County Commissioners  
For Somerset County

Respectfully Submitted:



Kimberly Lopez  
Executive Secretary