

**Southside Network Authority
Summary Minutes
February 10, 2023**

The February 10, 2023 meeting of the Southside Network Authority (SNA) was called to order by Chair Andria McClellan at 2:06 PM. Chair McClellan thanked everyone for their attendance and called the roll to determine meeting attendance.

Chair McClellan welcomed the newest Southside Network Authority member, Ms. Debbie Ritter from Chesapeake.

Southside Network Authority Voting Members in Attendance:

Debbie Ritter, Chesapeake	Al Moor, Suffolk
Andria McClellan, Norfolk	Peter Wallace, Virginia Beach (Alternate)
Cliff Hayes, Portsmouth (Alternate)	

Other Participants:

Steven DeBerry, SNA Executive Director	Mike Lockaby, Guynn, Waddell, Carroll & Lockaby, PC
Charles Kiriakou, Alternate, Suffolk	
Laura Fitzpatrick, Alternate, Chesapeake	Matthew DeHaven, CTC Technology & Energy* Robert Crum, HRPDC

Others Recorded Attending:

Dan Constantineau, Jay Krail, and Catherine Lindley (Chesapeake); Andrew Fox (Norfolk); Kelsey Swieringa (Portsmouth); Tom Mueller (Suffolk); and Simone Elmore, Matt Klepeisz, Dmitry Rekhter, and Christopher Vaigneur (HRPDC Staff).

**Indicates attendance by electronic means*

Approval of the Agenda

Chair McClellan called for a motion to approve the agenda as presented. Mr. Albert Moor Moved to approve the agenda; seconded by Mr. Cliff Hayes. The Motion Carried.

Ms. Debbie Ritter abstained from the vote as she was not a member of the Southside Network Authority at that time.

Public Comments

Chair McClellan reported that there were no submitted comments. She invited members of the public to address the Southside Network Authority. There were no public comments.

Approval of Minutes

Chair McClellan called for a motion to approve the minutes of the January 13, 2023 meeting. Mr. Moor Moved to approve the minutes; seconded by Mr. Hayes. The Motion Carried.

Project Management Update

Mr. Steven DeBerry provided a brief update on the Regional Connectivity Ring Project, including project zones, construction, the revised permit timeline, and a project progress map that was developed with help from the Columbia Telecommunications Corporation (CTC). He noted that Mr. Lockaby will provide a brief on the Global Technical Systems (GTS) negotiations.

Mr. DeBerry started his presentation by providing a map that divides the municipalities into permit and construction zones. These zones will assist with the tracking of permitting and construction status by geographic area. He proceeded to provide an update on the permitting status in the various localities, and reviewed the areas of the ring that are currently under construction.

Chair McClellan asked where the incoming cables would connect to the subsea cables. Mr. DeBerry responded that they will connect in the Virginia Beach area at the carrier neutral hotel. Mr. Wallace confirmed that this is current, noting that the connections will be less than 10 feet apart at that location.

Chair McClellan stated that the cables of the Eastern Broadband Authority will be coming into Pleasure House Road, which is about 1000 ft from our proposed fiber ring. She asked if the plan was to connect with them. Mr. DeBerry stated that he will meet with the Executive Director of the Eastern Shore to discuss and provide a briefing as soon as the meeting has taken place.

Chair McClellan reported that she met with both GTS and Global Links and that there are many subsea cables coming ashore and clustering in Virginia Beach. She noted that not only are these broadband cables coming ashore related, but there are also cables associated with offshore wind. There is potential conflict at the federal level of these various cables. She suggested working with the federal delegation to ensure that the Southside Network Authority will not be impacted.

Ms. Ritter asked for more details. Chair McClellan clarified that the Offshore Wind area is 26 miles off the coast of Virginia Beach. The electricity will be transferred along the seafloor to Virginia Beach, before entering the grid. International subsea cables are also coming ashore in Virginia Beach as well, and there are also maritime cables. Mr. Ritter asked if the cables were all at the same drop location. Mr. Wallace responded that the cables were at different locations.

Chair McClellan mentioned the necessity of being proactive with the federal delegation and pointed out the possibility of being overshadowed on the broadband cables by offshore wind, however, both are equal opportunities for the region.

Mr. DeBerry and Mr. Crum noted that they will monitor this situation and keep the Authority Board updated on any developments.

Mr. DeBerry continued by providing an update on the work of the RVA757 Connects Megaregion which is evaluating the potential for the Hampton Roads and Richmond regions

to be branded as a global internet hub. This study will provide information on what this opportunity could mean for our region related to economic opportunity. Mr. DeBerry noted there will be a final meeting for a strategic plan. He suggested inviting the consultants to attend a Southside Network Meeting to provide an update on their evaluation.

In response to a question, Mr. DeBerry stated that construction on the fiber ring will occur over the next 18 months. Negotiations with GTS continue. He invited Mr. Mike Lockaby, Southside Primary Authority Legal Counsel, to provide a progress update on the comprehensive agreement negotiations with GTS.

Mr. Lockaby stated that work continues on the details of the agreement. He noted that it will be important for him to meet with local economic and community development staff in the localities to receive input on parameters within the agreement about GTS providing priority to disadvantaged areas, economic development sites and other institutions. He requested the assistance of Authority Board members to make contact with their staff to arrange these meetings. Board members requested that Mr. Lockaby provide them some background information on these meetings so that they could assist.

Mr. Lockaby noted that there will be some complex language developed for the Comprehensive Agreement with GTS and that the information provided by locality staff will be very helpful to this effort.

Chair McClellan stated that the goal was to have a partner that could market 96 strands. Mr. Lockaby reassured that he and the attorney from GTS are working on an agreement that is beneficial and includes the priorities of both GTS and the Southside Network Authority.

Mr. Crum asked for a timeline for when the agreement will be completed. Mr. Lockaby responded that the comprehensive agreement should be completed by July 1, 2024. In January 2024, 25% of the passings should be built, with 10% of those in low-income/disadvantaged areas.

Mr. Crum and Mr. DeHaven updated the Authority on the federal grant application that was submitted in September. This application requests federal funding to extend the fiber network from the southside fiber ring through the two bridge tunnels and create a similar ring in the cities of Hampton and Newport News. Mr. Crum and Mr. DeHaven provided additional details regarding the proposed assets that would be connected on the Peninsula and noted that they hope to receive news on this grant opportunity in the next month. They noted that if the grant is awarded, the SNA Board will need to have a governance discussion with their partners on the Peninsula on the best path for proceeding.

Chair McClellan clarified the next steps, which are updates from the RVA757 Connects megaregion on the global internet hub study, addressing subsea cable conflicts, meetings between Mr. Lockaby and the City Planners and economic development professionals, as well as updates on the federal grant.

Ms. Laura Fitzpatrick asked if there was a Project Steering Subcommittee. Mr. DeBerry clarified that a subcommittee is formally included in the agreement but was not established yet. Mr. Lockaby added that the subcommittee will include members of the Southside Network Authority.

Proposal to partner with Hampton Roads Planning District Commission (HRPDC) in the development of a new website

Mr. Bob Crum, HRPDC Executive Director, gave a brief introduction on an opportunity for the SNA to partner with the HRPDC and other regional organizations to develop an updated website. He noted that the SNA is moving into an important phase of the project and will be constructing an important regional asset. He noted that it is important for the SNA to have an effective, modern website to provide the public information on the SNA's efforts related to the fiber ring.

Mr. Crum introduced HRPDC/HRTPO Communications Administrator Mr. Matt Klepeisz to provide the Authority background information on this opportunity.

Mr. Klepeisz briefed the Southside Network Authority on a new concept for a website. He explained that a Content Management System (CMS) is software that helps to create, manage, and modify content on a website without specialized technical knowledge or coding.

Mr. Klepeisz highlighted what a CMS should provide as follows:

- Customer friendly
- Invites and provides for public participation
- Allows functionality and flexibility to ensure cross-team use and growth
- Provides for transparency of work the HRPDC does
- Serves as a visual equivalent of the high-quality work that the organizations do

Requests for proposals (RFP) have a lengthy process. He noted that the Virginia Information Technologies Agency (VITA) is not always cost-effective for organizations of this size. The quote for a CMS for two main sites is over \$200,000 and does not include design changes. The language in the current public agency contract can be utilized to allow negotiations with a vendor, and if due diligence has been done to initiate a contract with this vendor and another agency, it can be used cooperatively.

Local synergies were found by searching through language at the websites of the 17 jurisdictions in the Planning District Commission region, which showed that 12 out of 17 localities employ CivicPlus. The HRPDC and Hampton Roads Transportation Planning Organization (HRTPO) Finance Team researched contracts and found the Cooperative Procurement language in the contract between the City of Norfolk and Civic Plus. CivicPlus has familiarity with the region and localities. Conversations with the CivicPlus Team to look further into opportunities were initiated.

Mr. Klepeisz continued his presentation by highlighting the benefits of CivicPlus and explaining CivicPlus's credentials and accolades. CivicPlus is the number one provider of government technology, with over 12,000 local government customers. The new sites are built and designed according to current best practices and are Americans with Disability (ADA) Accessibility compliant. The site can be expanded with new modules or updates for future growth. CivicPlus guarantees 99.9% uptime and offers disaster recovery and continuity. The five-year contract includes a side redesign in the fourth year, and additional layers of security will be added to the existing sites.

After compiling staff requests regarding areas that are lacking on current websites, CivicPlus presented a proposal that allows for updating the HRPDC, HRTPO, Hampton Roads Transportation Accountability Commission (HRTAC), Hampton Roads Construction Standards, HRTPO Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), and potentially, the Southside Network Authority website. The proposed solution is a main site folder to house the sites. Each of the individual sites then fall under a module housing individual-related pages for each heading. The current URLs will be maintained and will point to the homepage for each module which will all have the look and feel of a standalone website with appropriate heading-specific branding. This also includes maintaining existing web addresses as redirects, ensuring zero traffic loss, with modules that allow personalization on headers/footers to create a clear and visual delineation between sites. Additionally, CivicPlus included search separation, which keeps search results within a module confined to that module.

Mr. Klepeisz shared the price structure and stated that if the Southside Network Authority participated, the cost for the first year would total \$14,909, the second year would be \$5,155, and after that, there would be a 5% increase per year with a redesign included in year four.

Mr. Klepeisz concluded his presentation by summarizing the benefits of a contract with CivicPlus and mentioned that the cost is competitive in the market and the benefits are high. CivicPlus is a highly reputable vendor with an easy-to-use CMS that offers more growth and flexibility and includes a more robust image repository, stronger calendar segmentation by meeting type, subscriber database for notifications, online job application tool, and ADA Accessibility check tool. In addition, there are expansion opportunities, including Chatbot and AudioEye Accessibility tools for automated compliance remediation.

Chair McClellan asked who would create the content for the website. She mentioned that the package is more than the Southside Network Authority needs at this time but allows for growth that will meet the SNA's future needs.

Mr. Klepeisz offered to manage the website on behalf of the Southside Network Authority. Mr. Crum suggested that Mr. DeBerry collects the info and decides on the content, and Mr. Klepeisz will be responsible for posting said information.

Mr. Kiriakou mentioned that it should be controlled who decides on the website's content and what the message is. He referred to the costs of the new website and how to pay for it.

Mr. DeBerry stated that there is money in the budget to be used for marketing purposes. The cost for the website could be added to the operating budget as a website project and/or part of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with HRPDC.

Mr. Hayes stated that the website is an important tool and the opportunity for growth is key.

Chair McClellan suggested that a Website Subcommittee would be established to give Mr. DeBerry directions on the content.

Chair McClellan asked for a motion to approve the proposal and direct the Executive Director to work with HRPDC in the development of a new website. Mr. Moor Moved to approve; seconded by Mr. Hayes. The Motion Carried.

Old/New Business

Mr. Crum pointed out the handouts from Chesapeake that were distributed in advance of the meeting. Ms. Laura Fitzpatrick briefed the SNA on Chesapeake's first Popular Annual Financial Report (PAFR), which was created for the average community member. It provides financial information, along with information of interest to the general public, and spotlights the SNA Broadband project as well.

Chair McClellan expressed her gratitude that the Southside Network Authority and its projects were included in the report. Ms. Ritter stated that the PAFR is a public document that can be used as an excellent template for communication initiatives from other localities or public organizations.

Chair McClellan stated that the Old/New business item gives the opportunity to bring up things that are happening in the localities. She mentioned that Norfolk announced last week that Metronet is inviting access to their fiber which is the first portion of a city-wide fiber service to residences. She thinks the reason Norfolk was chosen is because of the fiber ring and that similar efforts are being made in other cities.

Mr. Kiriakou mentioned that a franchise agreement with Lumos Telephone LLC was approved by several cities. This effort will bring interest and additional competition from internet service providers in the localities because of the fiber ring. He stated that Suffolk started to pull fiber casings downtown on Main Street.

Mr. Crum mentioned that by the end of the month, the federal government is expected to release the request for proposals for a high-performance data facility to be located at Jefferson Lab. Jefferson Lab is mobilized, and the turnaround will be very quick, which should work to our advantage because Jefferson Lab and its partners are mobilized and have been preparing for this opportunity. He recognized the General Assembly for the local match that is proposed in the House and Senate budget. A decision is expected in the summer.

Chair McClellan asked if there were any other questions or comments.

Adjournment

With no further business to come before the Southside Network Authority, Chair McClellan adjourned the meeting at 3:26 PM.