## mikejohnson

**From:** mikejohnson [mikejohnson@co.southampton.state.va.us]

**Sent:** Thursday, May 20, 2010 9:38 AM

**To:** Mickey Sims

**Subject:** Southampton County

Mickey,
As we discussed, I just wanted to confirm that I have you on the Board of Supervisors meeting agenda Monday evening, May 24 at 6:00 p.m. We meet in the Board of Supervisors Meeting Room, Southampton County Office Center (where my office is located), 26022 Administration Center Drive, Courtland. We are excited about your project and look forward to learning more about your specific plans and timeline.

Best regards,
Mike

Michael W. Johnson
County Administrator
Southampton County
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# SOUTHAMPTON COUNTY

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757-653-3015
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August 10, 2009

Administrator
Rural Utilities Service
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Washington, D.C. 20250-1500

Assistant Secretary
National Telecommunications and Information Administration
U.S. Department of Commerce
Washington, D.C. 20230

**RE: Letter of Support for the Buggs Island Telephone Cooperative**

Dear Sir or Madam:

On behalf of Southampton County, I am delighted to provide this letter of support for the Buggs Island Telephone Cooperative as it seeks capital to construct a rural broadband network in the Commonwealth of Virginia. It is my understanding that the Cooperative is submitting an application for the Broadband Initiatives Program and/or the Broadband Technology Opportunities Program.

The Buggs Island Telephone Cooperative has committed to constructing, operating, and maintaining a rural broadband service that will benefit our local citizens and businesses. We strongly support the application of the Buggs Island Telephone Cooperative and hope that you will provide them access to federal stimulus money to assist in building a viable, sustainable rural broadband network.

With kind regards, I remain

Sincerely,

Michael W. Johnson
County Administrator

Print Page

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South Hill Enterprise

*Largest paid circulation of any Mecklenburg County newspaper*

BIT gets 18.9 M grant

Buggs Island Telephone Cooperative (BIT) General Manager Mickey Sims has been waiting for months on a decision on the application for an $18.9 million grant to help BIT to build, operate and maintain a wireless rural broadband and voice network across Southside Virginia.

On Monday at 3:33 p.m. the good news finally came, appropriately enough, by e-mail.

"The agony of not knowing was torture," said Sims, "because the demand is clearly there in all of the 15 county area."

The Department of Commerce's National Telecommunications and Information Administration's (NTIA) Broadband Technology Opportunities Program (BTOP) grant will be combined with a previously approved grant from the Virginia Tobacco Indemnification and Community Revitalization Commission of $3.8 million to fund the $23 million rural broadband program to provide wireless broadband access to 100 percent of 15 Southside Virginia counties.

"We are going to cover every county," said Sims shortly after applying for the grant in August 2009. "Every inch of the territory."

"In effect, we will provide top DSL service to rural subscribers at affordable rates," he continued. "It is a huge step for BIT and an huge step for the area."

"Having been granted access to this very important capital allows BIT to expand broadband and voice services to undeserved areas of our region on a timely basis," Sims said Monday after learning of the grants approval. "I am pleased that southern Virginia will benefit from the federal stimulus for rural broadband program of our federal government".

BIT Board President Ed Smith was also delighted with the news of the grant, noting that the BIT staff had worked hard to secure the funding and plan for the rapid deployment of this now almost necessary broadband service for businesses and homes in today's world.

The BIT Wireless project intends to offer wireless broadband at speeds of up to 10 Mbps to as many as 100,000 households, 14,800 businesses, and 800 community anchor institutions. In addition, the project will promote broadband adoption by discounting the cost of the equipment necessary to subscribe at home. The fifteen county area where BIT holds Federal Communications Commission wireless licenses extends from Amelia County to Halifax County and then east to Southampton County.

Sims said he hoped to get started on the project within 60 days.

"It will probably be 30 days before we get the grant package," he said, adding that it would probably take another 30 days to complete all the federal paperwork. "But once we get the grant we are ready to go. We have plans and engineering all done. We are looking at using utilizing existing towers that are already in close proximity to the Mid-Atlantic Broadband."

Sims said building the network would create close to 80 jobs, most of which will be located in Mecklenburg County.

"Now the real work begins," he said.

Reaction from officials

State Senator Frank Ruff said he was very excited about the award.

"They put in a great application to accomplish broadband in one of the parts of the state that has the greatest need for it," he said, adding that approaching it from a wireless stand point was added benefit. "We will all be very proud of what they are able to do and to show the country that there is a better way to do it."

Mecklenburg County Economic Development Director Angie Kellett said the creation of county-wide broadband could be a benefit for the area.

"It is a huge thing," she said. "It is a huge asset to have that availability. It makes us that more attractive. It should hugely help the entrepreneurs and small business folks get started."

"The Recovery Act was designed to make investments in our future competitiveness. Congratulations to Buggs Island for putting together a project that does exactly that. This is a real game changer for economic growth and quality of life in our area," said Fifth District Congressman Tom Perriello, who was instrumental in assisting BIT throughout the application process. "Reliable broadband service is the foundation for bringing new jobs and growing our local businesses. It boosts home values and the quality of life in our communities. Along with our victory earlier this year to bring broadband Internet to schools across Southern Virginia, this is a huge investment in our area's ability to create jobs."

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act provided a total of $7.2 billion to NTIA and the Department of Agriculture's Rural Utilities Service (RUS) to fund projects that will expand access to and adoption of broadband services. NTIA will utilize $4.7 billion of that funding for grants to deploy broadband infrastructure in the United States, expand public computer center capacity, and encourage sustainable adoption of broadband service.

"The level of interest in this program has been extraordinary, and is yet another indicator of the critical role broadband plays in achieving durable, sustainable economic growth," Assistant Secretary for Communications and Information and NTIA Administrator Lawrence E. Strickling said. "Like the grant announced today, the strongest proposals are the ones that have taken a truly comprehensive view of the communities to be served and have engaged as many key members of the communities as possible in developing the projects."

NTIA received more than 1,800 applications proposing projects totaling nearly $19 billion during the first BTOP funding round and is currently awarding grants on a rolling basis.

Monday's announcement marks the final grant awards from the first round of BTOP applications. All told, NTIA awarded 82 BTOP grants worth $1.2 billion that will expand broadband access and adoption through projects in a majority of states and territories. A total of 45 states and territories will be affected by this round of BTOP grants. NTIA recently began reviewing second round applications with the goal of making the first round two grant announcements this summer.

Buggs Island Telephone Cooperative was founded in 1951 as a local exchange (telephone) carrier and is headquartered in Bracey, Virginia, near South Hill in south central Virginia. The Cooperative is governed by a nine-member Board of Directors and subscribers "own" the Cooperative that currently has 23 employees.

Nicholas Elmes

editor@southhillenterprise.com