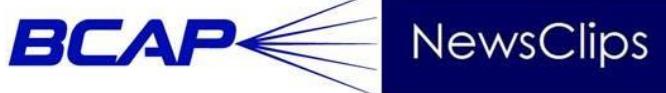


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As reported in today's *Cablefax Daily* and Thursday's *bcapsules*, BCAP – in a unanimous vote during the Association's teleconferenced Annual Meeting of Membership Wednesday – re-elected Atlantic Broadband's Fran Bradley to a second two-year term as Chairman. Fran's re-election begins his seventh and eighth years as Association Chairman, as he also held that role between 2005 and 2009. Also re-elected to an additional two-year term were the remaining Association officers who comprise BCAP's Executive Committee: Joe Lorah, Blue Ridge Communications as Vice-Chairman; Bob Wieand, Service Electric Cablevision as Secretary; and Dave Breidinger, Breidinger Associates (retired from Comcast) as Treasurer. Joe Taylor, Armstrong, also remains on the Executive Committee as Immediate Past Chairman. BCAP members also re-elected – to a three-year term on the Board of Directors – Shawn Beqaj of Armstrong, and Michael Hain of Lewistown-based Jackson Broadband (formerly with Nittany Media).

Broadband is not a luxury. It's a utility that's becoming invaluable for the community and economy, said county officials and supporters of a \$1.1 million project to expand broadband to the underserved northern area of the county.

The COVID-19 pandemic showed just how important it is for students and people working from home, said Cambria County EMA Coordinator Art Martynuska. But expanding broadband access in Cambria had been a need prior to the pandemic, he added. "It's been the No. 1 issue in our comprehensive plan," he said.

Ambulance services use broadband to send emergency EKG tests to hospitals. Farmers use broadband to communicate with customers and to help identify issues with equipment in the field. There are spots in the county that have no service, he said. The pandemic was the push the county needed to expand its service, said Commissioner William "B.J." Smith. "I think it's a great move," he said.

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Philadelphia Inquirer
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Cambria County Commissioners Smith, Tom Chernisky and Scott Hunt unanimously approved a \$1.1 million contract Friday to In the Stix Broadband, LLC, to expand broadband service. In the Stix, headquartered in Cresson, was the only bidder for the project. The county is using a portion of its federal pandemic relief funding received in June to cover the cost. The county has received a total of more than \$11 million in pandemic relief funding, much of which will be distributed as mini grants awarded to businesses applicants seeking reimbursement for shovel-ready projects undertaken to mitigate damage done by COVID-19. The source of the money is through the federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, which was signed into law in March. The county is now sorting through applicants to award all of the funding, Chernisky said.

The broadband project is tricky because in order for CARES Act dollars to be spent on it, the project must be complete by Dec. 30, he said. To ensure that deadline is reached, the vote for the broadband project came during a special meeting Friday morning. It could have been on the agenda for the regular meeting last week, but the commissioners wanted their solicitor to review the project with CARES Act lawyers to ensure it is a viable project, Chernisky said.

In addition, the commissioners said they did not want to wait until the next regular meeting on Sept. 24 because that would delay the project too long. A majority of the project's cost covers equipment needed to provide the broadband service, In the Stix co-owner Nick Weakland said. He compared the equipment's community value to a new fire truck. Weakland said the work entails outfitting nine existing towers – one of which is a grain silo of a local farmer.

Now that the contract has been awarded, work will begin. Weakland said he expects the job to be complete by Dec. 11, which gives "some wiggle room" for the CARES Act deadline. "Every minute minute to get all nine towers up is valuable to us. It's a tough hurdle," Weakland said. "The work includes getting equipment configured, coordinating frequencies so none of the towers interfere with each other, coming up with a network plan and hanging the equipment."

Before the commissioners approved their motion to accept the bid, Chernisky called on a series of about seven speakers representing Forest Hills, Central Cambria and Cambria Heights school districts, county emergency services, and farmers to offer comments. In addition, Martynuska read aloud three letters from people in the community who could not be there in person. All were in support of the project.

Forest Hills School Board member Ed Hudak said providing children an education at home is near impossible without broadband. In some cases during the pandemic, buses transported school work in paper form to students who had no broadband service, he said. "Our kids suffered, parents suffered, taxpayers suffered because of this. Anything you can do to bring broadband to these rural areas, not just Forest Hills, is a great accomplishment in this day and age. I feel horribly for local businesses, but this is also something to plan for the future. I think this is a great first step," he said.

But before the motion to approve the bid or any of the discussion took place, the meeting started with a public comment period. That's when John DeBartola angrily told the commissioners they were misusing the dollars. He said it was unjustifiable to spend the money on broadband when businesses needed direct help. DeBartola also considered the supporters at the meeting to be assembled and scripted by the commissioners and not truly reflective of the community's feelings. He blasted Chernisky after the meeting was adjourned. "It's not fair," he said. — ***Johnstown Tribune-Democrat***

Clout spotted complications in the brief life of a "Democrats for Trump" billboard on Ridge Avenue at the southern end of Roxborough last week. First, the disclaimer — required by state and federal law — said the local Republican

ward put up the money, not Democrats who are fans of President Donald Trump.

Second, Walt Vogler, the Republican leader of the 21st Ward, said he had nothing to do with it. Even though the billboard read, "Paid for by 21st Ward GOP" — his ward's political action committee. "Absolutely not," Vogler said. "I know nothing about it." Adding to the mystery, the billboard vanished after Clout starting asking questions. By Saturday, it had been replaced with an ad about blood pressure. Vogler said the billboard was "absolutely" a violation of state law requiring accurate attribution for political advertising. Clear Channel Outdoor, the billboard owner, did not respond to requests for information.

Democrats outnumber Republicans in the ward, 67% to 19%. Trump won 27% of the vote there in 2016. Lou Agre, the Democratic ward leader, smells shenanigans. "If there is really a Democrat for Trump in the 21st Ward, he's the only one," Agre said. Maybe someone felt envious of the Republican Voters Against Trump effort, reported recently by Clout: 130 billboards across Pennsylvania with Republicans explaining why they are voting

