



VIRGINIA GAY HOSPITAL
Clinics, Home Health, Nursing & Rehab

August 9, 2018

Dear Vinton Municipal Electric Utility Board Members,

This letter supports both personally and professionally a communications utility which at a minimum can provide high-speed broadband to all homes with a Vinton address.

Virginia Gay and its medical clinics use the internet to transmit vital patient data every day via our electronic health record, Picture Archiving Communication System (used for quick turnaround of Radiology studies) and Lab Information System (LIS) likewise for quick turnaround of laboratory studies. We are just beginning to use Telehealth, but that modality is quickly becoming the standard of care for many specialty physician services in rural areas which previously featured a doctor on site. Learning for our general employee population is now often accomplished via Webinars rather than sending people off-site to conferences. Likewise, so are continuing medical education events for doctors. I could go on, but we use a lot of internet services in this organization and will use a lot more in the future as we grow and more services are delivered via telehealth. We pay a lot of money for these services and would rather pay it locally, hopefully at a somewhat lower rate.

Telecommuting (working from home) is becoming more and more prevalent and requires decent service. Our doctors often telecommute as do many of their spouses for their employment. The supply of Family Practice Physicians is scarce. Having high-speed broadband is now a required part of the recruiting package we present to potential doctors coming to our community.

Although VGH and its affiliates will endure whatever the city's decision is on high-speed broadband service in Vinton, the doctors and other professionals we recruit probably will not. Our concern is that if we are fortunate enough to hire someone with the skills we need, instead of bringing their families to Vinton they will locate in Shellsburg, Van Horne, Atkins or wherever else they can find good affordable housing and technology options.

I see this as a necessary next step if we wish to see our community grow rather than decay.

Respectfully yours,

Mike Riege
Virginia Gay Hospital Administrator

A Healing *tradition*