

Unison Preservation Society

NEWSLETTER

Working to Protect and Preserve our Historic Village and Countryside

VOL. 11 • NO. 1 • 2024

• SPRING •

UNISON, VIRGINIA

When Will Unison Get High-Speed Internet?

By Bob Pettit

High-speed internet is coming to Unison, County officials say, but not as soon as originally anticipated.

Internet construction in rural areas of Loudoun County is part of a state-wide program, called the Virginia Telecommunications Initiative (VATI) (www.dhcd.virginia.gov), funded ultimately by the federal American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 through grants from the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development and allocations from the County. Loudoun's original contract with All Points Broadband (APB), the Richmond-based internet service provider primarily responsible for constructing the system and which is also providing \$20 million in funding, called for "substantial completion" of the approximately 600-mile fiber network in Loudoun by July 2025. However, according to the VATI dashboard (www.public.tableau.com), only 32 miles (or five percent) of the system had been constructed by early April.

Given the slow pace of construction, the County on April 2 requested a 15-month extension from the state for completion of the project—until October 31, 2025. In response, the state agreed to the delay but emphasized its "expectation that this project will be fully completed by the new extension date, and no additional extensions will be requested."

Utility Pole Construction Delays

The County and APB—along with Dominion Energy and NOVEC, which have partnered with APB for construction of the system—point to the difficulty in evaluating and constructing fiber optic cable on Loudoun's existing utility pole network. As envisioned, APB and the utilities would construct the system by hanging fiber optic cable on more than 10,000 existing utility poles in the County. The problem, APB and County officials say, is to "make ready" the existing utility pole network for use by fiber optic cable. That process requires each utility pole in the system to be physically inspected and evaluated to ensure that the pole is capable of carrying the fiber optic cable. In some cases, poles will even

Spring beauty wildflowers bloom in woodlands all around Unison. They are an important source of food for the rare West Virginia White butterfly, which is in sharp decline due to loss of its woodland habitats and the spread of invasive garlic mustard, which attracts the female butterflies to lay their eggs on the plant but the larvae are unable to develop afterwards making it a trap for this important butterfly species.

Photo by Steve Bowerman

need to be replaced in order to handle the additional load of fiber optic cable. After the evaluation, APB must apply to each pole owner and get approval from the owner. Only then will APB receive a "notice to proceed" with construction.

To make things worse, APB reports, this process is being replicated at the same time in rural areas throughout Virginia—stretching the resources of APB and its utility partners. In fact, more than 50 internet service projects have received state grants, APB says. As the County staff reported to the Loudoun Board of Supervisors on April 16, the volume of "make-ready, related design, engineering, and construction activity throughout Virginia is several orders of magnitude greater than in typical years and this volume is stressing the industry."



Fiber optic cable installation at the intersection of St. Louis and Foxcroft roads near Unison.

So, what does this mean for the Unison area?

Unfortunately, the timing of actual service is uncertain. The original goal, according to the APB and the County, was to construct the entire 600-mile network before APB would actually start to offer service to individual homes and businesses. Now, however, Dave Friedrich, the County's Assistant Director of Information Technology, tells the UPS Newsletter that "the launch of service will be rolling" throughout the proposed rural service area as construction is completed in individual areas. The County remains hopeful that the first service will be available in 2024.

The County isn't involved in the construction sequencing, Friedrich says. That's up to APB and its utility partners. APB did not respond to questions about service to

the Unison area. In an online informational release, however, the County says that it and "All Points Broadband will not be able to determine exactly when service will be available to specific addresses or neighborhoods." (www.loudoun.gov/5658/Broadband-Expansion) Area residents will be notified 90 days in advance of service availability, the County says.

The price of the service has yet to be established, but the County says it's "expected to be similar to what is offered from other cable and fiber-optic internet service providers." The County emphasizes that it is "not responsible for providing broadband services, does not collect broadband service fees, and has no authority to determine or revise fees set by service providers." ■

Music on The Porch 2024 Schedule



The Music on the Porch series will begin on Thursday, May 30.

Come listen to some good music, bring a picnic, talk to your neighbors and have a good time!

May 30
Laura Tsaggaris



June 20
Furnace Mountain



July 18
King Street Synchronators

August and September
TBD

Are you covered in the service area? You can see if your address is included in the high-speed internet service project by registering on the APB lookup tool. www.onboarding.allpointsbroadband.com

UPS Sponsors Conservation Speed-Dating Event in Unison

On the morning of April 3, a dozen Unison residents who own farms in our area gathered at the Unison Store for a "conservation speed-dating workshop" organized by Justin Proctor of Virginia Working Landscapes (VWL)—a program of the Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute in Front Royal. As Justin explains, the key to these workshops is gathering a dozen or so conservation and technical experts in fields ranging from pasture management to invasive plant removal to erosion control in one place at the same time. Having all this expertise gathered together in one room makes the speed-dating format possible. The experts

circulate around the room spending 10-15 minutes with each landowner—speed-dating, in other words—listening to landowners' concerns and management goals, answering questions, and suggesting ways that the participants might consider improving the habitat on their properties for biodiversity. Tables were set up in the Unison Store—one for each farm—and the speed dating began.

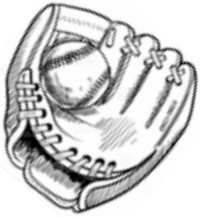
Look closely at the photo. You'll see large maps at each table. VWL provided each landowner with a 2' x 3' aerial map of their farm. These helped the conservation and technical experts at the meeting better understand the "lay of the land",

so to speak, enabling them to see where wetlands, streams, pastures, woods, and meadows were located on each property. By the end of the morning, a lot of great ideas had been discussed around the room. To cite a few examples, several neighbors were discussing how to create a wildlife corridor connecting their properties, others were considering how to alter mowing schedules in their fields to protect nesting grassland birds, and some were even considering converting fields to native grasses. Maybe most important, follow-up meetings were being scheduled with conservation and technical experts to come out to individual farms to advise how to take the next steps in improving landscape and watershed management around Unison and where to find financial support for some of this work. UPS was pleased to sponsor the April 3 speed-dating workshop—the first to take place in Loudoun County. VWL plans to organize more of these workshops in the future for interested Unison residents. If you would like to participate in such a workshop later this fall or next spring, please contact Justin Proctor at (607) 229-6255 or ProctorCJ@si.edu. ■



Back Then:

Since the UPS newsletter was first published in the Spring of 2013, we have run a number of articles about Unison's history. We thought it might be interesting occasionally to rerun some of these articles. With baseball season now underway, it seemed appropriate to start this new feature by republishing two articles about Unison's involvement with our national pastime. The first appeared in the spring of 2015 and the second in the spring of 2022.



The National Pastime Comes to Unison—and then Goes

By Mitch Diamond

Baseball first came to Unison and Loudoun County in the 1860s as returning soldiers from the Civil War brought home the game they had first played in camp. It rapidly became popular, and by 1869 when the new Leesburg team played Hamilton (in Hamilton), it was reported in the local papers in detail.

The game adopted its more familiar rules and equipment and became more organized too. An official Loudoun League was established in 1914 and by 1920 it included Leesburg, Purcellville, Round Hill, Lovettsville, Hillsboro, Aldie, Middleburg, Bluemont and Waterford. Newspapers reported each game in detail and noted that hundreds of fans showed up to watch the best local teams play.

Unison fielded its own league team for the first time in 1947, which included members from at least two long-time Unison families—the Crauns and Furrs. Two from the former and four from the latter were on the team. They practiced and played on a diamond near the intersection of Bloomfield Road and Unison Road. Baseball was a big deal at the time.

The *Loudoun Times Mirror* had extensive write-ups of each game. For example, in 1949, the paper reported that 800 people turned out for a game between Middleburg and Unison under

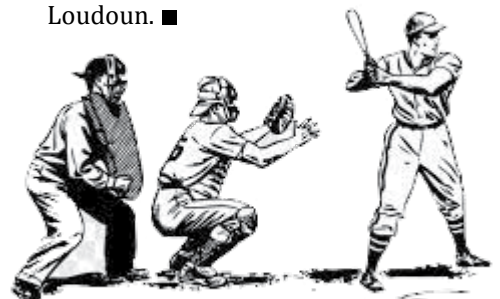


This is an earlier Unison Virginia baseball team. Baseball was, and still is, a big event on local levels in Loudoun County.

the lights in a new stadium in Purcellville. This was an impressive turnout for a baseball game considering that total population of Loudoun County then was just over 20,000. Unison lost 1-0.

The *Times* didn't use first names in the article, but a Craun was pitching for Unison. "It was a heart-breaking game for Craun to lose," according to the paper, "as he pitched a fine game, time after time stopping Middleburg's heaviest hitters." Most likely this was Bobbie Craun, who was a star pitcher for Unison. The Craun farm was just east of Unison on Foxcroft Road.

The Unison team had several successful seasons, but by the mid fifties it was not doing well and by 1957 the Unison team was gone and its best players joined other area teams. And not many years later, organized baseball, other than junior league play, vanished from Loudoun. ■





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How to Support the Unison Preservation Society (UPS):

UPS depends upon contributions from people living in our community who want to preserve our historic village and the countryside surrounding it. Since the UPS is a not-for-profit 501(c)(3) corporation registered in Virginia, all contributions are tax deductible. Contributions should be made to the Unison Preservation Society and sent to the post office box listed above.

Ideas for Newsletter Articles:

We are particularly interested in gathering material about Unison for future UPS newsletters. If you have ideas for newsletter stories, please e-mail us at unisonnewsletter22@gmail.com



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Unison's Field of Dreams



By Tara Connell



Aubrey Hall checks out the field on Bloomfield Road that used to be where the Unison baseball team played. Even today, you can still see where home plate was.

The 29 people that gathered March 12 to discuss challenges facing Unison burst into applause just once. Was it for a brilliant idea? No. A grand strategy realized. Nuh uh.

It was for Aubrey Hall, who had just admitted he played for the last Unison baseball team back in 1956. Yes, Aubrey. The newest Unison resident in the room.

Aubrey was raised in Purcellville, a member of the family that owns the Hall Funeral Home. He played for a number of teams in the Loudoun County Baseball League during his youth, mostly for Round Hill. He played for Unison just one year "because they needed a player." He was 17.

He went on to become a doctor and practice in Clifton Forge, VA until his retirement a couple of years ago when he thought about coming home. Low and behold, a house opened up for sale across the street from the old Unison baseball diamond. And next to it was a house for his daughter and son-in-law. Now, as you can see in the picture, he is still outstanding in his field. ■

And be sure to check out our redesigned website at unisonpreservationsociety.com

Check this Box!

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