

A regular meeting of the Albemarle County Broadband Authority was held on November 15, 2017, at 5:04 p.m., in Room 241 of the County Office Building, McIntire Road, Charlottesville, Virginia.

PRESENT: Ms. Liz Palmer, Mr. Rick Randolph, Mr. Bucky Walsh, Mr. Mike Culp, and Mr. Bill Fritz

ABSENT: Mr. Landon McDowell

Also Present: Mr. Andy Herrick, Mr. Lauchlin Lee

Agenda Item No. 1. Establish Quorum and Call to Order.

Mr. Walsh established a quorum and called the meeting to order.

Agenda Item No. 2 Approval of Agenda

Mr. Randolph **moved** to accept the agenda. The agenda was accepted by a unanimous vote.

Agenda Item No. 3 Approval of October 18, 2017 Minutes

Mr. Randolph **moved** to approve the minutes. The minutes were approved by a unanimous vote.

Agenda Item No. 4 Public Comment

Virginia Merra of Fiber Light Communications introduced herself. She stated that Fiber Light Communications has fiber to Charlottesville and offers service to institutions. They are looking to expand and for opportunities to address the Broadband Authority's initiatives. She stated that they have worked successfully with other localities to improved their network.

Mr. Randolph asked how Ms. Merra had learned of the Broadband Authority. Ms. Merra stated she had learned of the Authority from other localities, personal contacts and the website.

Mr. Walsh asked what type of service Fiber Light Communications offered. Ms. Merra stated that it is not residential and typically not last mile. Service is typically 100 megabytes or greater of dedicated service meaning it is not shared with others. Fiber Light Communications sells to retail providers such as Ting.

Agenda Item No. 5. New Business

Item No. 5a. Virginia Telecommunication Initiative Grant Applications

Mr. Culp stated that three applications requesting a total of \$1.4 million have been submitted. Mr. Culp noted that at least one of these will be denied because the total amount requested exceeds the amount available. A tentative decision on the grants is not expected by the Department of Housing and Community Development until January 18, 2018 at the earliest but that date may be moved back to March. Mr. Culp stated that we may have more information by December about the status of the

applications. Mr. Culp stated that we do not have information on what other localities have applied for. All applications are supposed to go thru a two week public review. Mr. Culp has not seen any information on other applications. Mr. Walsh requested an update at the next meeting.

Item No. 5b. Albemarle County Public Schools Wireless Service Project

Mr. Walsh deferred this item until later in the meeting.

Item No. 6 Unfinished Business

Item No. 6a. Albemarle Broadband Authority Rules and Procedures

Mr. Walsh stated that we have received a tentative draft.

Mr. Herrick noted that he is still working on the rules and procedures and what has been prepared is very much a work in progress. The draft will be sent out prior to the next meeting.

Mr. Randolph requested that the changes be highlighted.

Mr. Herrick stated that the rules will be based on those of the Board of Supervisors and that the changes will be identified and highlighted.

Item No. 5b. Albemarle County Public Schools Wireless Service Project

Ira Socol, Executive Director of Technologies and Innovation (interim) for Albemarle County Public Schools introduced himself and said he would give an update on the schools project. Mr. Socol stated he had spoken with the Broward County, FL school system. They have 250 thousand students. The school system is working with Verizon and all students are served. Mr. Socol noted that the density and terrain are very different from that in Albemarle County.

Mr. Socol stated that the school system has a transmitter on Carters Mountain. This transmitter reaches some students by MiFi. Southwood has a receiver that converts to MiFi to provide service. Mr. Socol stated that the school system is using three approaches to provide service, MiFi, home receiver, WiFi mesh system. The WiFi mesh system has an affordability issue for the student.

Mr. Socol discussed the southern feeder system of the schools. This area is served or will be served by Carters Mountain and a couple of other towers including ones at Western Albermarle High School and Albemarle High School. The towers are fed by microwave due to the cost of using CenturyLink. Mr. Socol stated that the Albemarle High School tower is under construction and expected to be in service by January 18, 2018. It will serve the Jack Jouett area. Mr. Socol stated he is trying to work with the Emergency Communications Center to use their facilities. Mr. Socol stated that the challenge is at what point is it no longer economical to provide service. The cost of service to the last student is high and the schools are still looking at options. Mr. Socol that the schools are making slow progress, maybe slower than what was stated to the press by previous staff.

Mr. Socol stated that new technology is better, it is available and it is being used. The fiber buildout continues and they have approval from the Virginia Department of Transportation for installation on I-

64 between exits 107 and 124. Fiber continues to be installed north on Route 29. Crossing Hydraulic Road is a concern because of the unknowns of future development in the area.

Mr. Socol stated that connecting facilities like Stony Point Fire Department is a concern. This is due to the need to determine what is educational vs. non-educational. The school system is responsible for reporting how E-Rate funds are used to the Federal government.

Mr. Socol stated he wants to work with the Broadband Authority.

Mr. Socol stated that grades 3, 4 and 5 are going to be sent home with computers. These will have a secondary login for the parents that will connect the parents to the school.

Ms. Palmer asked for clarification of the differences in MiFi and WiFi.

Mr. Socol stated that MiFi is a receiver that allows you to connect to the tower and then converts to WiFi which is the standard wireless connection that people have in their homes. The MiFi uses the educational spectrum. The schools work with other localities to make best use of the spectrum.

Mr. Walsh asked when the initial deployment will occur.

Mr. Socol stated that deployment is weather dependent but the goal is that by March another 200 students in the Jouett feeder system will be served and quadruple that by next year. The fiber build out is a 2 year program and will connect to all schools.

Mr. Walsh asked if the student will have the same access at home as at school.

Mr. Socol stated it is the same system.

Mr. Walsh asked what percent of students will be served.

Mr. Socol stated that they have a clear path to 90%. The last 10% will be difficult.

Mr. Randolph stated that he appreciated the honesty of that analysis. Previous staff would say that 100% would be served which was not practical.

Mr. Socol stated that the last student is the hardest and most expensive to serve. Mr. Socol stated he will do whatever he can to partner with others.

Mr. Walsh asked how many schools will need to have towers.

Mr. Socol answered 5 schools.

Mr. Fritz asked if this included existing towers.

Mr. Socol answered yes.

Mr. Culp asked if the schools encourage additional conduit during construction. In other words do they have a dig once policy.

Mr. Socol stated that the schools support both conduit and dark fiber, whatever works. They are working with the Virginia Department of Transportation to install dark fiber.

Mr. Randolph stated that the Broadband report went to the Board of Supervisors in the fall. If the schools know of an area that needs service they should let the Broadband Authority know so that service can be coordinated with others that have similar needs.

Mr. Socol stated that the schools are heat mapping students to try and find clusters of students to serve.

Mr. Socol stated that he is trying to set up a regular monthly meeting with Mr. Culp to address issues.

Mr. Fritz stated that he would like to attend those meetings. This would allow information to be shared with other providers and potentially coordinate with applicants for towers.

Mr. Walsh encourage Mr. Socol to let the Authority know if the Albemarle Broadband Authority can coordinate with any other Broadband Authorities.

Item No. 6b Insurance/Indemnification of Albemarle Broadband Authority Members

Mr. Herrick stated that the Authority could use the Virginia Association of County's Group Self Risk Pool. This requires a resolution. Appropriation of funding is pending so the request would be unfunded. The Authority should authorize the chair to sign the necessary documents subject to funding.

Ms. Palmer **moved** to authorize the chair to sign the necessary documents subject to funding.

Mr. Randolph **seconded**.

Mr. Culp noted the fee is annual.

The motion **passed** unanimously.

Item No. 6c Goals and Objectives for the Albemarle Broadband Authority

Mr. Walsh noted that the goals include the affordability statement from the previous discussion.

Ms. Palmer noted that affordability statement may have to be updated in the future.

Mr. Walsh stated that the goals should be updated annually.

Mr. Randolph **moved** to approve the goals and objectives.

Ms. Palmer **seconded**.

The motion **passed** unanimously.

Agenda Item No. 7 Other Matters

Mr. Culp provided a correction. The amount request in the grant is \$1 million and \$11 thousand not \$1.4 million.

Mr. Fritz provided an update on the Broadband Working Group meeting held by the Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission on October 27. The Commission is working on legislative initiatives that

will request that the General Assembly increase funding for local broadband authorities. The initiatives will also request that no actions be taken to reduce the scope of services that may be provided by local broadband authorities. At the meeting other authorities stated a concern about utilization of broadband facilities. If broadband is made a utility the other authorities are concerned that the investments they made will suddenly become available to any provider and make that investments less valuable. This is not a concern for Albemarle as we have no facilities owned or operated by the Authority or the County.

Mr. Walsh asked if we obtain a heat map of service areas from the providers would that information be in the public domain. Mr. Walsh stated that he would like to start conversation with providers to see what they may be willing to share.

Ms. Palmer noted that CenturyLink has been working with the County and providing some information.

Mr. Culp noted that the Authority has some advantages in receiving information and holding it. Providers report annually to the state. The problem is that if one house in the census block is served it means the whole block is served. Another issue is that actual service is below what is stated as being available.

Ms. Merra stated that there is a for fee service called Fiber Locater. Fiberlight will share what they have with the Authority. Verizon and Comcast do not participate in the service.

Ms. Palmer asked if a similar fee service exists for cell service.

Mr. Walsh stated that he will start talking to vendors to see what they are willing to share.

Mr. Herrick stated that he will work with the Chair to see what has to be made public and what doesn't.

Mr. Culp stated that the Federal Communications Commission CAF II (Connect America Fund Phase II) auction is coming up and some Verizon areas are available for funding. Funding is done by block group.

Mr. Culp noted that Gary Wood of Central Virginia Electric Cooperative is on the January 17, 2018 agenda of the Authority. Central Virginia Electric Cooperative has a broadband initiative that will be discussed. This is very exciting but we need to hear about the service to be provided and where it will be provided.

Mr. Walsh noted that the next meeting is on December 20.

Agenda Item No. 8 Adjourn

Ms. Palmer **moved** for adjournment

Mr. Culp **seconded**.

The meeting adjourned at 6:04 p.m.