

Team B: Funding Strategies – 2/27/14 – 4pm-5pm

In Attendance: David Plunkett, Pat Groot, Philip Freeman, Liz Palmer, Sarah Baldwin, Bill Fritz, Mike Culp

Bill is on the NACO Telecommunications & Technology Steering Committee

Mike said that FCC funding that we thought was no longer available may still be available

- Funding would not be available to local governments, but to companies
- Andrew Draper has more information on this than anyone – would be great to learn CenturyLink's response to this

Pat has researched DHCD's telecommunications plan

- This funding, if it were to become available again, is for the last mile
- Must evaluate the entire County, not just certain sections → the only eligible areas will be those that meet the low- and moderate-income areas
- Pat: DHCD has a history of requiring a lot of legwork for not a lot of funding → Liz has worked with DHCD before and confirmed this
- In addition to data we would have to collect, DHCD requires significant assessment of predicted future use
- Pat & Liz discussed whether we need to hire an outside consultant to map out current wireless service across Albemarle County
 - Bill mentioned that there is a federal government agency that is requiring private wireless carriers to provide data about their coverage across areas

Liz said that when she tries to gather support from other BOS members, she will need to pitch whatever points to economic development

- Mike touched on the growing importance of net neutrality & how we have a vested interest in ensuring that our citizens have access to great broadband service
- Pat says groups will be more likely to invest money if we can show an ROI

- Bill says that 99% of Albemarle County is served by one “broadband” provider by the FCC’s definition of broadband – reason being that satellite is grouped as one provider and by the definition, you can in fact get broadband from satellite
 - Liz says that this points to our need to create our own definition of “broadband” for Albemarle County

Mike said that if public schools were to put towers on County-owned structures, we may feel as if we need to allow private companies to put towers on these structures as well

- It would be great to have Vince Scheivert come and explain to our team Albemarle County Public Schools’ plans to build out a fiber network/possibly utilize towers across the County
- If families of ACPS students could receive internet at their homes for free, could it also be provided to the public at large?
 - If you can provide it to everyone, is it still broadband? Or is the radio spectrum not large enough that it would still be a lot of bandwidth to each home?

Pat: The EDA awarded money to non-profits, who contracted with the PDC, to build a backbone.

- Pat is doing research re: Cumberland Plateau

Based upon our initial discussion with our County Attorney, it does not look likely that we could provide incentives to providers or homeowners (because of Virginia State statute)

- Nelson County is offering incentives, so we need to figure out how they are doing this – likely because they have a Broadband Authority → So... DO WE HAVE THE AUTHORITY TO FORM AN AUTHORITY?

Pat asked if incentives are self-sustaining?

- As part of Nelson County customers’ bills, they are paying (after the fact) to get fiber to their doorstep
- Bill: In Rockbridge, getting fiber to users cost about \$12,000 per user.

Liz: Nelson County is renting out space on their towers

Bill has only seen an ROI from these situations on Indian reservations

Bill: In the planning world, some folks liken broadband expansion to getting electricity to rural areas

Group consensus that the phone companies have determined where there is an ROI that leads them to increase broadband service in a particular area

- Companies have said: 1) give us money, or 2) increase density

Pat: Are there companies in this community that support telecommuting? If so, will these employers support fast-speed internet service expansion – to the point that they might provide incentives?

Vince (joined the meeting late): The FCC has given ACPS 2.5 MHz spectrum – our Schools division is now determining how to use it & best get internet to students/employees