

A regular meeting of the Albemarle County Broadband Authority was held on January 22, 2020, at 5:15 p.m., in Room 235 of the County Office Building, McIntire Road, Charlottesville, Virginia.

PRESENT: Mr. Bucky Walsh, Mr. Waldo Jaquith, Ms. Liz Palmer, Ms. Donna Price, Mr. Trevor Henry, Mr. Bill Fritz

ABSENT: None

Also Present: Mr. Mike Culp, Mr. Rick Randolph, Mr. Richard DeLoria (Senior Assistant County Attorney)

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

Ms. Palmer **moved** to accept the agenda.

The agenda was **approved** by a unanimous vote.

Agenda Item No. 3 Introduction of New Board Members

Ms. Price and Mr. Henry were welcomed as the new board members.

Agenda Item No. 4 Approval of December 11, 2019 Minutes

Ms. Palmer **moved** to approve the minutes.

Ms. Price **seconded**.

The minutes were **approved** by a vote of 5:0. Mr. Henry abstained from voting.

Agenda Item No. 5 Public Comment

Mr. David Ludwig introduced himself. He stated that he lives in the Taylors Gap area and only has CenturyLink as a provider. He has submitted a speed test with a speed 7 Mbps down and 0.7 Mbps up. Mr. Ludwig stated that the speed is often less. Cell phone service in the area is not good and does not provide an alternative. Mr. Ludwig stated that others in the neighborhood have the same issue and have submitted responses on the ABBA website. Mr. Ludwig stated that he is near the Central Virginia Electric Cooperative service area but is not in it.

Mr. Culp offered to contact Mr. Ludwig and discuss options to upgrade the CenturyLink service.

Ms. Elizabeth McMartin introduced herself. She stated that she lives in the Stony Point area and only has CenturyLink as a service provider. She stated that she has been getting 3 Mbps service. She stated that in December CenturyLink was saying that higher speeds were available up to 40 Mbps. The speed however has been reduced to 1.5 Mbps. She stated that she has submitted an online test to ABBA. She stated that she is close to the CenturyLink upgrade for Watts Passage but is not in it. She stated that she may contact the neighbors to get CenturyLink to upgrade service and to provide data to the ABBA website.

Ms. Judith Eaton introduced herself. She stated that she lives in the Cobham area. She stated that CenturyLink told her she could get 20 Mbps service but she is only getting 6 Mbps for the same price as 20 Mbps.

Agenda Item No. 6 Old Business

Agenda Item No. 6a Virginia Telecommunications Initiative (VATI) 2019 Update (CVEC)

Mr. Culp stated that the CVEC project is underway and Midway is on target for spring. Mr. Culp stated that he would invite Mr. Gary Wood to come to the February meeting.

Mr. Culp provided updates on other projects. The Zions area is taking customers. Cash Corner should be coming soon. Mr. Culp noted that the tax grant payments won't be made until 2021 and that the payments will be coordinated with the Economic Development Authority.

Mr. Randolph asked for a description of the delay in White Hall and Schuyler.

Mr. Culp state that Mr. Wood should address this and how development is being prioritized.

Ms. Palmer stated she was told the substations needed more work and it has to be coordinated with Appalachian Electric Power.

Mr. Walsh asked if it would be possible to get both Mr. Wood and a Firefly representative.

Mr. Jaquith asked if there have been any conversations between ABBA and Rappahannock Electric Cooperative.

Mr. Walsh noted that Mr. Wood has stated that Rappahannock Electric Cooperative has not shown any interest in broadband.

Mr. Jaquith stated that he would reach out to Rappahannock Electric Cooperative.

Agenda Item No. 6b. VATI 2020 (CenturyLink) Application Update

Mr. Culp stated that VATI had awarded CenturyLink \$291,000 for 8 projects. The projects are all fiber to the home and had a total of 837 potential connections. Mr. Culp stated that the documents need to be signed in February and he will work to coordinate the signatures. Mr. Culp noted that CenturyLink still has to sign the contracts and that should be done by the next meeting of ABBA.

Mr. Fritz asked who is working on the \$291,000 award that ABBA made for these projects.

Mr. DeLoria stated that he and Mr. Culp are working on it.

Mr. Walsh noted that CenturyLink has not signed the agreements yet.

Mr. DeLoria asked if there was any impact if CenturyLink does not accept the grant.

Mr. Henry stated that failure to accept the grant may hurt future VATI applications. He recommended that ABBA make a public announcement of the awards.

Mr. Culp said that he would coordinate with Ms. Emily Kilroy.

Mr. Walsh stated that ABBA is still getting data from the public, but we should do another push to get more.

Mr. Culp distributed a draft Plan to Collect Broadband Data. Mr. Culp noted that since January 1, 2020 ABBA has received 40 reports with data on service.

Mr. Walsh **moved** to approve the Plan to Collect Broadband Data.

Ms. Palmer **seconded**.

Mr. Henry asked if there had been coordination with Communications and Public Engagement Office and the schools.

Mr. Culp stated there had been coordination.

Mr. Henry stated that in our public outreach we should explain why we are collecting data.

Ms. Palmer recommended outreach to Channel 29 to follow up on a recent article they ran.

Mr. Jaquith stated that we should explain that the service providers are not providing the data, so we are seeking it from the public.

The motion was **approved** unanimously.

Agenda Item No. 6c. Work Session: Group Review of ABBA Project Funding Strategies

Mr. Culp stated that the Board of Supervisors has appropriated \$2 million for ABBA. To date ABBA has committed \$291,000 for the CenturyLink project. Mr. Culp stated that ABBA can either sit and wait for the next round of VATI applications or do something else.

Mr. Walsh noted that individuals have taken up collections amongst themselves and worked with the service providers to expand service.

Mr. Randolph stated that the Board of Supervisors appropriated these funds and ABBA should work to expand broadband. An RFP is close to the spirit of what the Board of Supervisors had when creating ABBA.

Mr. Randolph noted that citizen group initiatives favor those with resources and doesn't serve those without resources as well.

Ms. Palmer stated that an RFP is the most equitable approach.

Mr. Walsh stated that scoring systems are great but until you have some experience in administering them, they are difficult. In the beginning projects should be reviewed for their value.

Ms. Price asked how to calculate the need.

Mr. Culp stated that ABBA could use poverty rate and free and reduced lunch information.

Mr. Jaquith noted that the state has \$19 million and we have \$2 million to offer. If ISPs are willing to go after VATI they should be willing to apply to ABBA. ABBA has the ability to leverage a lot of service.

Mr. Randolph noted that if ABBA does not use the funds already allocated additional funds will likely not be allocated.

Ms. Palmer asked what capacity CenturyLink has to provide expanded service.

Mr. Culp stated that in his opinion CenturyLink has capacity to expand. Mr. Culp stated that his concern was if we would get responses to an RFP.

Ms. Palmer noted that CVEC needs to work on their service area before they can consider expanding beyond the CVEC boundaries.

Ms. Price stated that ABBA needs to use the funds that have already been allocated or those funds are at risk.

Mr. Henry stated that he agrees with the VATI and RFP approach and recommended we also work with the schools.

Mr. Jaquith asked if vendors may be willing to work with us instead of VATI.

Mr. Culp stated he believed they would.

Mr. Jaquith asked if the RFP process would build in a way to gather data on what service is provided and where.

Mr. Walsh recommended that a draft RFP be prepared for discussion at the next meeting.

Mr. Culp and Mr. Jaquith volunteered to prepare a draft RFP.

Mr. Culp asked if ABBA should have a technology preference.

Mr. Jaquith stated that ABBA should not have a preference. The focus should be on outcome.

Agenda Item No. 7. New Business

Agenda Item No. 7a Overview of Commonwealth Connect Coalition

Mr. Walsh noted that the Commonwealth Connect Coalition was asking ABBA to support additional VATI funding.

Mr. Walsh stated that ABBA supports additional VATI funding.

Mr. Randolph recommended that the Board of Supervisors should also be asked to support additional VATI funding.

Agenda Item No. 7a Approval to Execute Joint ACPS and ABBA plan to Collect Broadband Data

- i. Project Mapping Overlays and Data
- ii. Internet Speed Test and Data Form

Mr. Walsh stated that this item had been acted on earlier in the meeting.

Agenda Item No. 8. Adjourn

With no other business before the Authority, Mr. Walsh adjourned the meeting at 6:35 PM.

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