



Albemarle County

Legislation Text

File #: 23-224, **Version:** 1

AGENDA DATE: 4/19/2023

TITLE: Albemarle Broadband Authority Quarterly Report

SUBJECT/PROPOSAL/REQUEST: Receive the Albemarle Broadband Authority Quarterly Report

ITEM TYPE: Consent Information Item

STAFF CONTACT(S): Richardson, Henry, Fritz, Culp

PRESENTER (S): N/A

LEGAL REVIEW: Not Required

REVIEWED BY: Jeffrey B. Richardson

BACKGROUND: The Albemarle Broadband Authority (ABBA) was incorporated on August 21, 2017, to extend affordable broadband internet service access to every customer in Albemarle County. This quarterly report is being provided as information on ABBA's work from January - March 2023.

STRATEGIC PLAN: Infrastructure Investment - Prioritize, plan, and invest in critical infrastructure that responds to past and future changes and improves the capacity to serve community needs.

DISCUSSION: ABBA has held three public meetings in 2023. The ABBA agendas and meeting minutes are posted for public review on the County's website. During this quarter, ABBA and the Broadband Accessibility and Affordability Office (BAAO) continued to administer the Virginia Telecommunication Initiative (VATI) 2021 and 2022 projects, which combined will achieve universal broadband access in Albemarle County by end of 2025.

Currently outstanding are award announcements from the Department of Housing and Community Development regarding the VATI 2023 cycle. Staff entered into a joint application with several localities, administered by the Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission, and in partnership with Firefly Fiber Broadband. The County's portion of the project would ensure that 1,575 locations in the County would have access to installations concurrent with the VATI 2022 cycle, rather than after completion of funded passings.

BAAO continued monitoring the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) Bridge benefit, which extends the \$30 per month federal ACP benefit by adding up to an additional \$20 per month for eligible households. Comcast is the first provider partner for the ACP Bridge benefit and eligible residents have begun to see the additional credit on their monthly bills. This effort was funded through general fund appropriations during the FY 21 and FY 22 budgets. Staff worked together with various partner agencies to submit a grant application for ACP Outreach. During this reporting period, staff received advance notice that the grant application has been accepted for an award of funds in the amount of \$248,500 for the purpose of providing direct support for community members desiring to sign up for ACP.

BUDGET IMPACT: There is no expected budget impact.

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the Board receive this report for information.

ATTACHMENTS:

A - Quarterly Report