



Albemarle County

Legislation Text

File #: 24-242, **Version:** 1

AGENDA DATE: 5/1/2024

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 2024.

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: The full report is provided as Attachment A. The Albemarle Broadband Authority (ABBA) has held two public meetings in 2024. At its meeting of January 24, 2024, ABBA decided to take a position on the General Assembly's bill HB800 on pole make ready attachments. The Authority found that this bill seemed to shift the burden of pole attachment costs from internet provider companies to rural electric cooperatives. At that same meeting, the Authority determined that it would need to amend its agreement with Brightspeed for the VATI 2021 project to accommodate the decreased scope of work Brightspeed was willing to complete. At the February 27, 2024 meeting, the Authority received a presentation from Brightspeed indicating that many of the chronic installation and service problems that existed from the time of Centurylink had been addressed by Brightspeed and that service levels were high. This was supported by observations from the Broadband Accessibility and Affordability Office (BAAO) with regard to the citizen complaints received. The Authority took action to reschedule the March 27, 2024 meeting to April 2, due to a conflict with the Board of Supervisors' meeting schedule.

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. During this reporting period, the FCC reported that the ACP program will be out of funding in April. The FCC initiated the ACP Wind-down period and BAAO is monitoring the impact and assisting ACP participants with next steps.

Negotiations for the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funded project with Firefly Fiber Broadband are complete and in the final states for signature. This ARPA Grant project when complete will provide universal fiber coverage for the County.

BUDGET IMPACT: There is no expected budget impact.

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the Board receive this report for information.

ATTACHMENTS:

A - Quarterly Report