

A regular meeting of the Albemarle County Broadband Authority was held on March 27, 2019, at 5:00 p.m., in Room 235 of the County Office Building, McIntire Road, Charlottesville, Virginia.

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

ABSENT:

Also Present: 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 Approval of January 23, 2019 Minutes

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

Mr. Randolph **seconded**.

The minutes were **approved** unanimously.

Agenda Item No. 4 Presentation and Discussion: Real Estate Values and Broadband

Agenda Item No. 4a Guest Speaker: Paul McArtor

Mr. McArtor introduced himself as a realtor working with Avenue Realty. Mr. McArtor stated that a lack of high speed internet access is worse than a home having mold or no air-conditioning. Mr. McArtor stated that the appraised value does not take broadband into account but the presence or absence of broadband does impact the marketability of a home.

Mr. McArtor provided the results of sales information which indicates that houses without broadband are on the market for two extra weeks and sell for \$92,000 less.

Mr. McArtor stated that buyers have an expectation of broadband as a way of life. However, people often don't know what options are available.

Mr. McArtor observed that affordable housing is available in the rural areas of the County but people will not consider purchasing without broadband access.

Mr. McArtor reported that the County appraisal does not take broadband into account but it does take into account things like a fourth bedroom.

Ms. Palmer stated that people don't always know what fixed wireless is or that it may be an option. This may be because the companies providing the service are not advertising enough. Ms. Palmer observed that the County assessment uses comparables in determining the assessed amount.

Mr. Randolph commented that a significant problem is the use of census block level analysis to determine if an area is served.

Mr. McArtor stated that he finds that people say they do not have service but are operating on old data. Service may have been upgraded in the area and the homeowner is simply unaware that better service is available.

Mr. Jaquith asked if the Charlottesville Area Association of Realtors (CAAR) has service data that could be shared with ABBA.

Mr. McArtor stated he believes CAAR does have information and may be willing to share it with ABBA. Mr. McArtor volunteered to follow up with Mr. Jaquith on the CAAR information.

Agenda Item No. 5 Public Comment

No members of the public spoke.

Agenda Item No. 6. Old Business

Agenda Item No. 6a. Recap FOIA, Policy and Procedural Work

Mr. Deloria stated that there was nothing that the Board needed to do. ABBA is compliant.

Agenda Item No. 6b. Virginia Telecommunications (VATI) update

Mr. Culp stated he had received no news on the VATI applications. Information is expected soon.

Agenda Item No. 7 New Business

Agenda Item No. 7a. Welcome to our newest member: Waldo Jaquith

Mr. Walsh welcomed Mr. Jaquith to the Board.

Mr. Jaquith noted that he was not receiving the ABBA emails.

Mr. Culp stated he would work to correct the email problem.

Agenda Item No. 7b. USDA ReConnect Grant and Loan Program Overview

Mr. Culp summarized a handout (attached) from the USDA.

Mr. Walsh **moved** that ABBA should try and find people interested in applying and go for the 100% grants.

Mr. Culp stated that he could send a broadcast email to all the ISPs and see if they have any interest.

Mr. Randolph noted that Firefly may be interested in applying as a way to extend service beyond the CVEC service area. Mr. Randolph suggested that a phone discussion may be more productive because it allowed for an easier conversation about the program and what may be possible.

Ms. Palmer **seconded** the motion.

The motion was **approved** unanimously.

Mr. Culp stated that he would provide an update at the next meeting.

Agenda Item No. 8. Other Matters

Mr. Jaquith stated he would like to invite Evan Feinman to a future meeting of ABBA to discuss potential use of Medicare/Medicaid funds in providing broadband to support telemedicine and potentially using Yancey as a Community Health Center.

All members supported inviting Mr. Feinman.

Ms. Palmer noted that the Cove Garden town hall was coming up and that broadband will likely be a topic. Ms. Palmer stated she could update people on the activities of ABBA and pending VATI applications.

Mr. Culp announced that the ABBA quarterly report was tentatively scheduled for the April 17th Board of Supervisors meeting.

Agenda Item No. 8. Adjourn

With no other business before the Authority, Mr. Walsh adjourned the meeting at 6:00 PM.



ReConnect Engineering Requirements 101

USDA RUS ReConnect Program

1. What is USDA ReConnect? <https://reconnect.usda.gov> is a 3 option funding mechanism for rural broadband projects: 100% Grant | 50% Grant/50% Loan | 100% Loan.
2. What are the due dates? May 31, 2019 | June 21, 2019 | July 12, 2019
3. Does ABBA have time to apply? Yes.
4. Does ABBA require a partner?¹ For the Grant options – probably. For the loan option probably not.
5. Do we know of any interest? No; ABBA, if interested, should talk with ISPs soon.
6. Are there ReConnect eligible areas in Albemarle?¹ Yes, based on the ReConnect Eligibility Map.
7. How are eligible areas defined?
 - a. For a 100% Grant; the proposed funded service area (PFSA) must demonstrate that 100% of the households do not have sufficient access to broadband defined at 10/1
 - b. For a 50% Grant/50% Loan, the PFSA must demonstrate that 90% of the households do not have sufficient access to broadband defined at 10/1
 - c. For a 100% Loan, the PFSA must demonstrate that 90% of the households do not have sufficient access to broadband defined at 10/1
8. How are the PFSAs validated? USDA Staff will visit PFSAs and validate.
9. What is the minimum speed for projects? 25/3; though higher speeds receive more “points”.
10. Are there ABBA funding requirements? Yes, each application must include a design certified by a professional engineer. The Grant application requires a 25% match.
11. Are there limitations on the size of the PFSA?¹ Not certain.

¹ ABBA requested a meeting with our USDA Regional Rep to discuss items 4., 6., and 11.