

A regular meeting of the Albemarle County Broadband Authority was held on October 24, 2018, at 5:00 p.m., in Room 235 of the County Office Building, McIntire Road, Charlottesville, Virginia.

PRESENT: Ms. Liz Palmer, Mr. Rick Randolph, Mr. Bucky Walsh, and Mr. Mike Culp

ABSENT: Mr. Landon McDowell, Mr. Bill Fritz

Also Present: Mr. Trevor Henry, Assistant County Executive and Mr. Richard Deloria, 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 accepted by a unanimous vote.

Agenda Item No. 3 Approval of September 26, 2018 Minutes

September 26, 2018 minutes were not available for review or approval. Review and approval of the September 26, 2018 minutes were deferred to the next meeting of November 28th, 2018.

Agenda Item No. 4 Public Comment

10 members of the public signed the sign-in sheet for the meeting.

R. Teaster - Greenwood

Anne and Mike Knasel - Greenwood

Michael Abbott - Greenwood

Paul Miller – Craigs Store Road

Pat Groot – Downtown Crozet Initiative

Chad Sokolowski – Gilbert Station Road

Carl Enfield – Dick Woods Road

Joes Jones – Vaair.net

Eric Warf – Vaair.net

Doug Simpson – Signal Hill

Mike Knasel introduced himself and his wife, Anne from Greenwood. He thanked ABBA for the excellent fiber installed and stated he had seen improvement with neighbors but noted that he and his wife do not have service. He stated for those in Greenwood that do not have service, children in schools and medical issues drive their need/desire for broadband service.

Michael Abbott introduced himself from Greenwood. He stated his need for broadband was for homeschool children (one in high school and one in middle school). Higher level classes drive the need for broadband (through distance learning, video conferencing and interactive learning. He stated the alternative was riding a bike to the Crozet Library. He added that his business needs (arborist) requires he VPN to connect to their office. Satellite does not work well with VPN.

Mike Knasel offered that they need low latency. The railroad tracks are the barrier to lines being run.

Gary Teaster introduced himself from Greenwood. He stated he was on the opposite side of the railroad tracks from available lines and the line stops at the end of their driveway. He stated that underground telephone lines and power lines are there. He has one daughter in special needs education that drives their needs for programs that are interactive. For business purposes, he needs broadband for telemedicine and to read x-rays through VPN. What service they do have limits his ability with connection speeds. He drives to the Crozet Library in the middle of the night to provide needed services through UVA Hospital Connection when the line runs right by their house.

Ms. Palmer inquired about Mr. Teaster's electrical provider.

Mr. Teaster stated Dominion.

Mr. Knasel showed a map of the area and relayed where connections are and lines stop. Dominion and Verizon have separate poles positioned to cross the tracks at the entrance of his neighborhood. There are a small number of prospective users, approximately 30+/- . Multiple crossings across the railroad as options for broadband connections to cross the railroad.

Mr. Walsh asked if Mr. Knasel had talked to Comcast.

Mr. Knasel said he had talked to Comcast and Comcast had said that it would be a year or more and may never be able to cross the railroad tracks. Comcast had stated that you'll have to pay the entire cost and anyone else following can connect with no charge.

Ms. Palmer commented the railroads are difficult to deal with and felt ABBA could contact Buckingham Branch on their behalf to inquire about feasibility of crossing the railroad.

Mr. Randolph felt the problem is larger than ABBA can address. He encouraged political action (voting) to ask officials to extend broadband capabilities; hold state legislators accountable to have providers extend further in the rural areas.

Mr. Abbott asked for a small incremental cost to extend the lines and complete the service started.

Ms. Palmer recognized Mr. Abbott's request as very reasonable.

Mr. Chad Sokolowski introduced himself as a resident of Foxwood off Gilbert Station Road. He has been in discussion with Comcast to get service run to 30 other houses in Foxwood. Comcast has told him that he and his neighbors would need to bear the cost of extending service. He and his neighbors now will need to decide if they each want to put up \$1,760 per household to do so. This totally depends on if ABBA can do anything to help their cause with Comcast. Mr. Sokolowski stated that for every five household that decide not to participate, that their per household cost goes up \$500 per house.

Mr. Culp stated funds are Federal funds.

Mr. Sokolowski said he'd heard that CenturyLink is "going to be doing this" in 2-3-4 years. He asked ABBA if the Foxwood residents go ahead and start collecting money from residents to start a connection. They are in a rock and a hard place situation. Feels that by January 2019 they would be ready.

Ms. Palmer clarified that CenturyLink has a 6-year calendar to get Connect America funds.

Mr. Culp stated that speaking for Glen Butler of CenturyLink that planning for a January-June 2019 to get to Gilbert Station Road. Believes that Glen definitely wants to get the project done.

Ms. Pat Groot introduced herself as being from the Downtown Crozet Initiative. She wants to setup some competition with providers. They will have boutiques and other businesses with residences located above. Would like to involve Ting, Comcast and CenturyLink in the competition. She is asking ABBA to be aware the economic development will not happen without greater than 25Mbps and wants ABBA to support providers.

Ms. Groot echoed a previous speaker's comment about being also able to see Comcast from her house. Comcast estimated it would be \$25,000 to run connectivity to her house.

Mr. Paul Miller introduced himself as a resident of Craigs Store Road. He stated his children are consistently on the Internet with schoolwork, testing, blackboard, and tutoring support. Education is at the heart of Broadband access for Western Albemarle. He stated CenturyLink and Verizon are the two providers in the area. They had connectivity at one time for one year and then went the MiFi card game, but they are frustrating and costly. CVEC is their provider. He questioned why if Nelson County can do this, why can't Albemarle County. He stated he was pressing ABBA to approve the \$55,000 tax rebate to CVEC.

Doug Simpson introduced himself from the Signal Hill area. CVEC switch substations are transferring connectivity to Nelson County. Mentioned the December 14th deadline is pushing the decision to find a partner. He asked about including provisions in the County Code to state "if you are doing a dig in the area then you need to do these things..." He'd also like to see a non-profit to setup the ISPs and fund and source them.

Carl Enfield introduced himself as a resident of Dick Woods Road. He stated some residents on Dick Woods Road don't even have cellular service let alone broadband. Verizon can't even provide dial-up. They can get an over-the-air signal only intermittently. Some areas can't get over-the-air signal because of trees.

5:43 – no other public comment

Agenda Item No. 5. Old Business

Item No. 5a. Virginia Telecommunications Initiative (VATI) Update

Mr. Joe Jones (Virginia Air Networks) stated because Comcast won't cross railroad tracks a wireless solution could work. His company would need Vertical access – connection to fiber from it; and use wireless to broadcast internet service.

Mr. Jones stated that he suggests Comcast first, then Virginia Air Networks.

Ms. Palmer questioned when Virginia Air Networks might be able to provide service.

Mr. Jones stated first quarter of 2019.

Ms. Palmer asked for what areas.

Mr. Jones stated Afton, Crozet area, Fluvanna, Warren, and Hatton.

Ms. Palmer asked if this would be line of sight.

Mr. Jones confirmed line of sight.

Item No. 5b. VATI Notices

There was discussion about the RFI (Request for Information). Purchasing has seen version 2. The RFI is ready for publication. The next step will be for ABBA to convince providers to come on board as a co-applicant. By putting the RFI out levels the playing field among providers.

Ms. Palmer stated that in relation to the RFI we are done. This is because we are not getting partners.

Mr. Culp agreed and **moved** that ABBA accept the RFI.

Ms. Palmer **seconded**.

The motion **passed** unanimously.

Item No. 5c. ABBA Project Site(s) Selection Process

A brief discussion was held where it was stated that it was important to note most unserved areas are by Verizon. ABBA needs to encourage other providers to come back to serve the unfulfilled areas.

Mr. Walsh asked how many responses the citizen survey has received.

Mr. Culp stated clearly over 1,000 responses have been received without taking out duplicates.

Mr. Walsh asked if these could be put on a map.

Mr. Culp recognized Damon Pettitt of Information Technology who put together the current map which is gathering the data to provide to the State for their map population.

Mr. Walsh asked when will Mr. Culp be able to provide final data for review of the unserved areas.

Mr. Culp stated the survey ends at the end of October. The deadline for VATI partnerships is December 14, 2018.

Item No. 5d. CVEC Discussion

Mr. Culp began by stating that the original CVEC request in Jan. 2018 asked for \$2.2 million over ten years. Since then another request has come in to the Board of Supervisors, this one for \$550,000. Two open discussions have happened and now a potential third is needed. Mr. Culp presented three options to ABBA:

Option 1 – Albemarle County Board of Supervisors not accept the proposal.

Option 2 - Albemarle County Board of Supervisors accept the proposal with some sort of caveat

Option 3 - Albemarle County Board of Supervisors accept the proposal as is.

Mr. Culp would like to offer up discussions.

Mr. Walsh asked if Mr. Culp has a proposal.

Mr. Culp stated deployed assets or substations = tax on assets. Without assets = no tax.

Mr. Culp would like to ask CVEC if they partner with CVEC on VATI and assets are put up, then those same assets become eligible for tax rebates. CVEC then could receive rebates only on assets built day forward.

All future projects would then be tax generating.

Ms. Palmer asked for clarification. Does Mr. Culp want to have these discussions with CVEC?

Mr. Culp said a discussion with Gary Wood (CVEC) was clear to him that with no contract in place we are not going to work with you.

Mr. Walsh stated that any money to CVEC via VATI is only additional money for CVEC. He asked should we recommend to the Board of Supervisors there are rebates to be approved?

Ms. Palmer asked if this would be over 10 years? \$550,000 over a 10-year period? How do we move forward on that? They can't get rebates.

Mr. Deloria recommended that we not call them "rebates", but rather a tax grant. He said the logistics would be if the Board of Supervisors approves a contract that CVEC property tax grants would funnel through the Economic Development Authority (EDA).

Ms. Palmer asked if this was the mechanism to make that happen.

Mr. Deloria confirmed that this is likely was the mechanism to make that happen.

Mr. Culp stated that with the complexity of the proposal, that this would be a return of tax based on Internet services.

Mr. Walsh clarified that this would be to recommend to the Board of Supervisors to investigate the contract with CVEC.

Ms. Palmer agreed that it is a recommendation to the Board of Supervisors.

Mr. Randolph stated he saw some negatives. ABBA hasn't considered the EDA's role in this process. Sites are inherently rural and not necessarily commercial development. This would be a policy question for the EDA. This would be a 10-year commitment binding the Board of Supervisors to a contract and technology of today (gave example of locked into 4G and not 5G).

Mr. Culp stated that CVEC is fiber to the home, 4G or 5G will not approach those speeds.

Mr. Walsh stated that 10 years from now that may not be the technology at that time.

Mr. Palmer stated this would be \$55,000 a year.

Mr. Walsh stated that currently they are having a hard time getting providers to come to the table.

Ms. Palmer stated that CVEC is only able to go this route because their infrastructure is in place.

Mr. Randolph stated that CVEC needs to respond to the RFI so that there is no presumed lack of fairness.

Mr. Walsh **moved** to refer to the Board of Supervisors the Albemarle Broadband Authority recommendation that they take up the CVEC offer to provide fiber Internet services to 3,600 Albemarle residents which would include a tax grant initiative of \$550,000 spread out over 10 years.

Ms. Palmer **seconded**.

The motion **passed** unanimously.

Mr. Culp noted that the Clerk to the Board of Supervisors would need to be advised that 30-45 minutes closed session would be needed for a PowerPoint presentation.

Ms. Palmer suggested a Board of Supervisors discussion about CVEC offer before a closed session.

Mr. Deloria advised Board of Supervisors discussion of offer before a closed session.

ABBA continued to discuss options for a meeting date.

Item No. 6a Support for Rural Business

Mr. Culp mentioned that 4GAS was supposedly put in place to help rural areas to avoid the MiFi game.

Mr. Culp also mentioned that he's been sending the 4GAS option to businesses/homeowners as a possible option if they contact him.

Mr. Randolph stated that he'd made the Town of Scottsville aware of the 4GAS option as well.

Agenda Item No. 7 Other Matters

Mr. Walsh noted that the next meeting is on November 28.

Agenda Item No. 8 Adjourn

Mr. Randolph **moved** for adjournment

Ms. Palmer **seconded**.

The meeting adjourned at 6:19 p.m.