

QAC Broadband Advisory Committee (BAC) Meeting

January 3, 2019 | 4 pm - 6 pm

Attendees

BAC/QAC

- Andrew Costello
- Ed Cummins
- Alison Davis
- Megan DelGaudio
- Scott Seaborne
- Adam Weinstein
- Jacob Wargotz

QAC Guest

- Bernard Hazelwood (Atlantic Broadband)

The BAC met to discuss progress to date and to plan next courses of action toward providing recommendations to the QAC Commissioners

Reviewed documents:

- Summary of Providers_121218
- Email from Brian Roche (BCC fiber) - outlining parameters of potential Broadband Authority
- Virginia Authority Act
- QAC broadband coverage map
- Options with Broadband_010319

BAC - scope of responsibilities and authority

- QAC officials have expressed doubt about establishing an Authority, which requires legislation - "not for faint of heart"
 - Establishing a strong oversight committee may be the easiest action
- What are the boundaries of what Commissioners can do? Do they wish to delegate vs decide on BAC-recommended actions

Opportunities and value proposition

- In addition to logistical activities associated with broadband infrastructure, a key need is public communication to engage county residents and businesses in the value of broadband beyond individual need
- About 80% of QAC is agricultural property and related business
 - Precision farming (modern farming) requires reliable, fast Internet access
 - Currently, many QAC farmers are "making do" with hotspots and do-it-yourself efforts that are inefficient and expensive
 - This sector is expanding - increase in # chicken farms in north county

- BAC believes agriculture can be a driver for broadband access with consumers “piggy-backing” on this opportunity - win/win

Next steps

- After meeting with many providers and consultants (both local and regional/national companies), BAC believes that a strategy proposal is required to develop plans for a hybrid coverage approach for QAC broadband
 - Incumbent provider-related issues with business plan - incongruent with county need
 - QAC can subsidize construction cost, county has trenchers, but ABB wants to own the conduit and the fiber
 - Franchise fee - doesn't apply to non-TV
- Previous estimate from Noovis was \$75K to map out strategy
 - Thus, the BAC wishes to develop an RFP given the cost and will recommend this to the Commissioners

BAC phased approach (with RFPs):

Step 1: determine what's feasible - generate matrix of data

- RFP 1 for strategic needs assessment
- Attack low-hanging fruit first
- To understand process - then pursue harder things
- Probably county needs to do some type of survey - unclear how to do this effectively and providers are unlikely to share their coverage data
- Can use Google Maps to look for fiber availability, can also view cable TV boxes (green)
- RFP 2 for design build

Step 2: decision-making based on findings of strategy assessment

- Implementation with BAC/Authority support (resources and county staff)
- Should include representation (economic planning, service providers, community engagement and communication)

Ask to Commissioners

BAC will present a letter to the AAC Commissioners at their second February meeting, to:

1. Provide an update of BAC activities to date
2. Request permission to develop and issue two, successive RFPs for countywide broadband-coverage strategy and engineering needs assessments, respectively
3. Request designation of an expanded authority for the BAC as an action committee working on behalf of the QAC Commissioners to follow up with the findings of the needs assessments (and thus provide adequate resources and staffing for future broadband-related activities).