Meeting Notes - March 3, 2021 at 5:30 p.m.

Attendees: Sally Greene (OC Commissioner)
              Earl McKee (OC Commissioner)
              Jim Northrup (OC CIO)
              Vasu Kilaru (resident)
              Paul Cardillo (resident)
              Terri Buckner (resident)
              Todd Broucksou (resident)
              Pat Hull (resident)
              Doug Noell (Chief IT Operations Officer Chapel Hill Carrboro City Schools)
              Victoria Deaton (Compliance Specialist Office of Institutional Equity and Inclusion Durham Tech)
              Jeff Sural (Director, NC Broadband Infrastructure Office)
              Dr. Monique Felder (Superintendent, OC Schools)
              Dr. Kathleen Dawson (Deputy Superintendent, OC Schools)
              Laura Jensen (Clerk to the BOCC)
              Travis Myren (Deputy County Manager)
              Mark Johnson (maybe)
              Jacci Ruhe (resident)
              Kimberley Connolly

Broadband Task Force March 3, 2021 @ 5:30 PM Meeting Agenda / Minutes

AGENDA

5:30 PM Welcomes and introductions – McKee
  -    Members introduced themselves and provided their background and interest

5:45 PM Discuss the charge for this group. – McKee

     The Task Force charge will include but not necessarily limited to:

- Discuss broadband solutions that will improve the quality of high speed internet servicesto Orange County residents;
- Recommend a plan to the Board of Orange County Commissioners that will expand reliable high-speed internet services to all county residents and businesses.

5:55 PM Brief History of OC Internet - Jim
          Attached January 2020 Memo to the Board

6:05 PM Ask Jeff Sural to speak regarding what State and Federal options are out there slanted toward Orange County.
          Jeff provided background and responsibilities of his office (more info in notes below)

6:15 PM Discussion - Greene/McKee/Group

6:25 PM Next steps/next meeting dates/frequency etc. - Greene/McKee
              o   Federal and state funding sources (1st meeting) – links below
              o   Community connect grants (from New Yorker article)
              o   Maps discussed (Jim's and Spectrum)
              o   Vertical assets in unserved areas

- o Can we get a map where no vertical assets exist? Current towers, proposed tower sites – Jim to provide
- o Can we get rep from Spectrum (RDOF), Piedmont or RiverStreet to present? (maybe 3rd meeting)
  - ▪ What areas are they going to focus on?
- o Schedule biweekly meetings

6:30 PM Adjourn Greene/McKee

Action Items:
      ACTION: Provide status of known internet service providers - Jim
      ACTION: Make maps of unserved/underserved available on orangecountync.gov/broadband website – Jim
- o Map of vertical assets in unserved/underserved areas (current towers)
- o Map of where no vertical assets exist (proposed tower sites)

      ACTION: Get timeline to include with meeting notes - Jim
      ACTION: Establish biweekly meetings – Sally (Kadle)
      ACTION: Map and details of Spectrum (~1776 homes) build-out – Jeff Sural

Discussion notes:
Comm Greene – welcome and introductions; aware of OC broadband shortcomings
State Rural Broadband (GREAT grant)
Jim – history

- Obama stimulus package trying to map where internet "wasn't" (2008); no good data; NC state took over franchise agreements from counties and municipalities removed ability of towns/counties to leverage relationships with vendors to provide internet to rural; State of NC legislation hasn't been friendly to govt sponsored or run internet service provider – Wilson internet was grandfathered; Comm Greene - legislature didn't want govt entities competing with commercial enterprises; advocates public utility but can't do it without law changes;
- HB129 in 2011; been trying to leverage TWC – lit up downtown H'boro, Cedar Grove and some other rural areas; did a survey, weren't specific enough with questions; no one in OC was satisfied with internet service; survey led to "how do we know where to apply funding" did "wifi to go" program that started putting things on map – epiphany => started looking at where TWC "wasn't"; 2016-2017 realized there are ~5000 homes that were out of TWC service area. Telecom companies were guarded about customer info. 2017 BOCC granted $500k for broadband pilot advertised – only 5 applied, only 2 were in the running and OpenBB won; spent $255k with OpenBB; service per resident is ~$1000/household. COVID came, two vendors came forward – both said can get 150 residents lit up in 18 months; RiverStreet was one of vendors but preliminary service would be wireless (like OpenBB)
- Terri - OpenBB can't get height to erect towers
- Jeff Sural – funding options available at state and federal level; a lot going on – both federal (FCC – primary funding and regulatory oversight); internet has specific exemption from regulation; FCC "light touch" regulation of internet; 7 billion for broadband last year; $300million coming from Dept of Commerce; $2billion for low income families; USDA has 2 programs – invested $75 million in various counties; # of initiatives in general assembly; Governor's budget coming out with significant broadband funding
- RDOF funding (FCC) – Spectrum has identified ~1776 homes (of 5000) to provide fiber to ; $16billion available for unserved areas; 6 year buildout; Charter will survey; Jeff will provide map and details
- May want to have Charter present to Task Force; State of NC has questions of concern regarding Charter plan – not sure they can deliver what was promised; Charter received $255k to connect 1776 homes;
- Todd – please share maps; any online versions with more granular details?; yes, some maps on county broadband site; Jim will share newest map from Jeff; fiber costs $15/ft in the ground (cheaper when it's in the air)
- Next steps – how often to meet and how long should meetings last? No deadline to submit report to BOCC. Jim/Travis – when should report be submitted? Travis – between 4-6 months; maybe establish bi-weekly meetings Weds at 5:30 for next couple of months

- Terri would like to have some sort of proposal before school starts back in August;
- Jeff – try to have a couple of key things to offer up to the BOCC for a possible budget amendment; NC fiber act would allow municipalities/counties to finance build broadband infrastructure
- Needed for next meeting:
  o Federal and state funding sources (1st meeting) – links below
  o Community connect grants (from New Yorker article)
  o Maps discussed (Jim's and Spectrum)
  o Vertical assets in unserved areas
  o Can we get a map where no vertical assets exist? Current towers, proposed tower sites – Jim to provide
  o Can we get rep from Spectrum (RDOF), Piedmont or RiverStreet to present? (maybe 3rd meeting)
    ▪ What areas are they going to focus on?

Post meeting potential funding links:

https://www.naco.org/resources/featured/state-and-local-coronavirus-fiscal-recovery-funds

GREAT grant = https://www.ncbroadband.gov/grants/great-grant The N.C. Department of Information Technology's Broadband Infrastructure Office, as authorized under S.L. 2018-5 and amended by S.L. 2019-230 and S.L. 2020-97, provides grants to private providers of broadband services to facilitate the deployment of broadband service to unserved areas of North Carolina.

Connect America Fund = https://www.fcc.gov/general/universal-service-high-cost-areas-connect-america-fund

Rural Digital Opportunity Fund = https://www.rdof.com/

Schools & Libraries Program = https://www.fcc.gov/general/universal-service-schools-libraries

Low Income (aka: Lifeline) = https://www.fcc.gov/general/lifeline-program-low-income-consumers

Coronavirus Relief Fund (aka CARES) = https://home.treasury.gov/policy-issues/cares/state-and-local-governments

Tribal Broadband Connectivity Program = https://www.ntia.doc.gov/blog/2021/ntia-announces-tribal-consultations-new-program-increase-broadband-access-across-indian

Community Connect Program = https://www.rd.usda.gov/community-connect

Emergency Broadband Benefit Program = https://www.fcc.gov/broadbandbenefit

In process;
E-rate Emergency Connectivity Fund =
https://energycommerce.house.gov/sites/democrats.energycommerce.house.gov/files/documents/Subitlte%20D_Other%20Provisions_FINAL.pdf