

MACON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
SPECIAL MEETING
March 24, 2022
MINUTES

Chairman Tate called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. as provided for in the Notice of Special Meeting of the Macon County Board of Commissioners, a copy of which is attached (Attachment 1) and is hereby made a part of these minutes. Commissioners Jim Tate, Paul Higdon, Josh Young and Gary Shields, County Manager Derek Roland, Deputy Clerk Mike Decker, and members of the news media, county employees and members of the broadband committee were present. Commissioner Ronnie Beale participated via conference phone. County Attorney Ridenour and Finance Director Lori Carpenter were absent.

Mr. Roland introduced the request for approval of match funding for a NC GREAT broadband grant opportunity. Mr. Roland stated this would not require any new funding and recognized the importance of pursuing the grant for the benefit of the county. He stated \$350 million has been set aside statewide for this round of funding and thanked the broadband committee members for their work in reviewing the grant requirements, conducting meetings with stakeholders and preparing the application. Mr. Roland also thanked state Rep. Karl Gillespie and state Sen. Kevin Corbin for their support in bringing officials from Raleigh to Macon County to participate in public forums regarding broadband.

Mr. Roland shared that the deadline for the grant is April 4, 2022 and that is the reason for scheduling today's meeting. He indicated that two private companies (Balsam West and Altice) have proposed three different projects for submission for this round of funding prior to today, and a third company (Frontier) submitted a proposal today, making a total of four applications for submission. The three proposals received prior to today have a combined total of \$10.6 million with a plan to bring broadband service to approximately 2,000 unserved and underserved customers in the northern and southern portions of Macon County. He further explained that most of the information about the proposals is proprietary information and cannot be shared until the grant is submitted.

Mr. Roland reported that the broadband committee has recommended that in an effort to demonstrate partnership, \$200,000 should be appropriated from American Rescue Plan funds received from the federal government to provide a local match to each of the applications. He indicated this would equate to

\$50,000 per application, but advised that not all applications will be awarded. If the grant is not awarded, the match funds will remain untouched. Mr. Roland stated the allocation of match funds would put these four providers at an advantage by giving them an automatic six additional points on their application scores. In addition, he said the private provider match would be reduced from 30 percent to 15 percent, meaning the for these \$10.6 million projects, the private provider match decreases from \$3.2 million to \$1.6 million.

Mr. Roland requested that the board allocate \$200,000 in American Rescue Plan funding to be used for a local match on GREAT grant submissions as well as authorization for him to write a letter of support reflective of this commitment for these applications.

After a brief discussion regarding the application scoring and award process, upon a motion by Commissioner Shields, seconded by Commissioner Beale, the board voted unanimously to allocate \$200,000 in American Rescue Plan funding to be used for a local match on GREAT grant submissions and authorized Mr. Roland to write a letter of support reflective of this commitment for these applications.

ADJOURN: At 6:36 p.m., upon a motion by Commissioner Higdon, seconded by Commissioner Young, the board voted unanimously to adjourn.

Derek Roland
Ex Officio Clerk to the Board

Jim Tate
Board Chair