

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
STAFFORD, VIRGINIA
MINUTES
AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN ACT (ARPA) WORK SESSION
AUGUST 16, 2022

CALL TO ORDER – A regular meeting of the Stafford County Board of Supervisors was called to order by Crystal Vanuch, Chairman, at 12:00 p.m. on Tuesday, August 16, 2021, in the Board Chambers, George L. Gordon, Jr. Government Center, 1300 Courthouse Road, Stafford VA.

ROLL CALL – The following members were present: Crystal Vanuch, Chairman; Pamela Yeung, Vice Chairman; Meg Bohmke; Monica Gary; Thomas Coen (electronically until arrival at 1:21 p.m.).

The following members were absent: Tinesha O. Allen; Darrell English.

Also in attendance were Randal E. Vosburg, County Administrator; Rysheda McClendon, County Attorney; Cheryl Giles, Deputy Clerk; Julia Homes, Assistant Deputy Clerk; various staff members; and other interested parties.

VOTE TO ALLOW REMOTE BOARD MEMBER PARTICIPATION

The motion passed 4-1, with Mr. Coen abstaining.

1. AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN ACT (ARPA) PROJECT UPDATE

Budget Director Andrea Light reviewed the work session agenda then stated that pay differential camera trailers have been completed in FY22, and other projects completed included bonuses for staff that were supported by ARPA funds, Office on Youth funding for counselors and a van, United Way rental and mortgage assistance, and FY21 furloughed employees brought back in FY22 at a cost of approximately \$143K. Ms. Light reviewed in process County projects.

Ms. Bohmke noted that funding for the increase would come out of General Fund money and asked Ms. Light what she was projecting for the Sheriff item.

Ms. Light responded that staff had planned to ask the Board to use ARPA funds for that, and if they did not want to do that, she would try to find another funding source.

Ms. Light stated that for the Patowomeck Tribe Access Drive had been brought before the Board as a capital project because of an increase in cost, and the County had used \$75K from the Transportation Contingency Fund—but additional funding from ARPA would cover the increase.

Ms. Bohmke asked if the Board had voted to take that money out of transportation.

Ms. Light replied that the Board voted to cover the contingency for the increased cost, but there

was no appropriation for that so it could come from transportation leftover funding; the funding source could be changed to ARPA for the General Fund for transportation.

Ms. Bohmke commented that this was a bit deceiving because it looked like this money was already used out of transportation, and she would be in favor of replacing that money in the Transportation Fund and using ARPA money instead.

Ms. Vanuch stated that when this was before the Board to talk about the overage allocated, it wasn't very clear that it would come out of the Transportation Fund to appropriate it. She said in the future, it would be helpful to have the Board made aware of that—and she had voted against it because of the overage itself.

Ms. Light said that staff could make sure they clarify that in the background report and in the resolution from this point forward to ensure that the Board understands where the funds would be coming from, even if there is not an appropriation action—either permanently or temporarily.

Ms. Gary stated that she had voted for that and would have given it different consideration if she knew it was coming out of Transportation.

Mr. Vosburg said that was part of it, as was information that they would come back at a future time to replenish the funding from ARPA.

Ms. Light stated that they have capital projects for Cedar Lane in the amount of \$1,650,000, and the Finance Department and County Attorney have been working with County Administration on an EDA agreement to give that to the EDA so it can be provided to the developer to do the project. She explained that the rationale is that the developer can get it more quickly, as they do not have the federal procurement rules associated with the ARPA funds. She said this would have to be brought back to the Board for consideration, which would happen in September.

Ms. Gary commented that she is not familiar with this project.

Ms. Vanuch stated that this project was voted on prior to the new Board taking over, and she asked Ms. Light if there was background information she could send to them.

Ms. Light responded that she could.

Ms. Vanuch asked about the company that backs to Cedar Lane and needs water and sewer.

Mr. Vosburg replied that it is Merritt.

Ms. Vanuch said she had some questions about the EDA agreement and whether it would have to come before the Board before it was executed, and whether the EDA would have to get into a separate agreement with the developer.

Mr. Vosburg confirmed that this was the case, stating that the agreement would be coming to the Board in September.

Ms. Vanuch asked that staff break this into two pieces, as the County had been burned many times in the past with items like this, and she noted the two pieces as being the Board's agreement with the EDA and the EDA's agreement with the developer to give them \$1.7 million to complete a contract. She asked what assurances the Board had that it would actually happen the exact way and time as the Board intends, circumventing the federal procurement process.

Mr. Vosburg explained that the County's capital projects staff would go and inspect to make sure the work is all done the way it should be, and reimbursement will not be done until then.

Ms. Vanuch asked for confirmation that this would be in the EDA agreement, because the Board does not see or approve the EDA agreement with the developer.

Mr. Vosburg confirmed this.

Ms. Vanuch stated that this concerned her greatly, especially in light of recent events between EDA and the schools.

Ms. Bohmke asked Ms. McClendon if there were safeguards that can be put into the agreement so the County doesn't get stuck holding the bag.

Ms. McClendon responded that they can include safeguards in the agreement, and staff would take any Board feedback and ensure it makes it into the agreement. She stated that as this moves forward, she will ascertain that the Board's wishes are reflected in the agreement and that they have the assurances they are looking for.

Ms. Yeung asked if the notes highlighted in red had already been brought back to the Board.

Ms. Light responded that these were new footnotes, and all items in red had a funding consideration or a provision such as an EDA agreement—so there is future Board action that could take place on any of these.

Ms. Light reported that there were some positions approved through the use of ARPA: the ERP Systems Accountant and ERP Systems Analyst, with both of those positions having started the recruitment and hiring process; and the Grants Accountant and Grants Coordinator positions both having been hired in late FY22.

Ms. Vanuch said she had recalled that they couldn't find anyone to fill that position and had wrapped it into Anthony Toigo's role.

Ms. Wagner explained that because they had such a tough time filling it, they transitioned that role and changed Mr. Toigo's title to Intergovernmental Affairs Manager, so he would be doing grants coordination and would get someone to help him with Constituent Affairs.

Ms. Vanuch commented that federal grants were a real niche—as she knows from her real job—and she wondered what experience he had in that. She noted that many organizations hire outside consultants and attorneys who are experts intertwined within these federal agencies, as there is certain language and documentation that must be used. She expressed concern that the County is committing to something that may lose them a ton of opportunities, as peer localities are getting federal grants but Stafford has not gotten any yet.

Mr. Vosburg stated that they have already been discussing this with Mr. Toigo, including use of companies to help secure federal grants, and that would be brought to the Board in the near future.

Ms. Vanuch asked why they changed his role if they were going to hire that out.

Mr. Vosburg explained that Mr. Toigo was doing grants coordination, which was what the position was originally being hired for, and Mr. Toigo was in the process of developing the inventory of grants—but would now shift into coordination, making sure deadlines are being met, applying for grants that are perhaps not as involved as federal grant programs, and working with the departments and their liaisons to apply for these grants. He emphasized that there were several grants that could be handled internally and not specialized with the federal grants company, and then hiring for the constituent work with the other position.

Ms. Vanuch said the Board has expressed to him individually about resources for the Board and constituent affairs—so before they hire that position out, they may want to have that conversation collectively. She added that if they all wanted to have a part-time constituent affairs person reporting in to that Board member, they may not need that particular role.

Ms. Yeung stated that when she initially mentioned this position, having one was important and having one specific to those tasks was important—and she was concerned about this. She said that they cannot go backwards, but she wished they had known this was the direction. She commented that they are looking at the success of other counties and wanting to have that same vision, so it would be helpful to have Board input into the wording of what that second position will be to ensure a level of trust that they can compete.

Ms. Light reported that under the Board's current strategy, there is currently a set-aside of \$2.6 million for future citizen support; economic initiatives is \$3 million (10% of the whole ARPA set-aside for that); there is \$3.2 million for furloughed employees as they are rehired through each fiscal year; and future appropriations—projects that are planned—reflect \$8.1 million. She said that these items total all of the \$29.7 million, which staff feels at this point would be used within the time requirements.

Ms. Light stated that staff would bring back ARPA projects for the Board on September 20, for changes in allocation of remaining funding of \$16.8 million, and they would continue to update the Board on any ARPA project progress.

Ms. Yeung commented that this is one of the reasons ARPA funds exist: to provide support to citizens with economic initiatives, furloughed employees, etc. She asked if there was an attachment that reflected future appropriations and specifics from the plans.

Ms. Light responded that she could provide that to the Board separately and could review what is left over currently and what they have, and they would discuss this on September 20 as well.

Ms. Bohmke said that the County had already dedicated some of the economic initiatives projects that totaled \$3 million.

Ms. Light replied that there were none.

Ms. Bohmke stated that she thought the kiosk had been appropriated.

Ms. Light reiterated that none of those had been appropriated.

Ms. Bohmke said that she had not attended the last CEDC committee meeting, but there were some things from that last meeting that she wanted to go over in more detail.

Ms. Yeung stated that she would like to reach a point to allow the EDA to do the work the Board is asking them to do, and they have come back several times to give information—so she hoped that this would be the time to provide them the actual support.

2. STAFFORD COUNTY BROADBAND PLAN PRESENTATION

Chief Technology Officer Mike Cannon stated that this was the County's first broadband plan and was part of an overall telecommunications strategy and plan that the Board approved to award to Columbia Telecommunications Corporation. He said that Ziggy Rivkin-Fish was with them, who was Vice-President of Broadband Strategy for the company and would provide an overview of the plan.

Mr. Cannon commented that this involved considerable work with a variety of stakeholders, including broadband providers and cable franchisees of the County, as well as meeting with schools and other constituencies. He said that the most challenging part of this is that there's no exact science in terms of knowing where broadband gaps exist, unless you surveyed every single resident, because providers are very protective of that information in terms of where their subscribers are. He stated that the plan is about 40 pages and is in their packets.

Mr. Ziggy Rivkin-Fish addressed the Board and presented information on the Stafford County broadband study. He said that one of the first tasks was to figure out the extent of the issue, which required a methodology of looking into federal data sources and voluntary reporting that internet service providers (ISPs) provide to the state. He stated that they also interviewed ISPs, collected speed data, interviewed stakeholders to get their sense of where issues lay, and conducted surveys—ranging from doing Google desktop surveys to sending engineers out into the field as needed.

Mr. Rivkin-Fish commented that it's not an exact science, but what's shown on the map presented are the areas of service/lack of service. He noted that this would be refined, and the state and federal government are getting more accurate maps following legislation that Congress passed many years ago but was never funded. He said they got their funding a few years ago, and the maps should be ready in early 2023, with further refinements to be done subsequently. He stated that the map also shows projects that have been funded through previous VATI grants with fixed wireless providers, which is relevant because those were very important projects that introduced an option that had not existed previously. He added that this was able to be deployed fairly quickly—but fixed wireless is not a future-proof technology, and the equipment has a life of only about five years, with this generation of technology not being the fastest. He noted that this ends up mapping into different speeds that will become relevant later for funding.

Mr. Rivkin-Fish presented maps showing coverage areas, noting that a large part of the County is served—but that doesn't mean there are a lot of options, and in most areas of the County, there is very little competition. He said the reason is that it doesn't make sense for cable and fiber providers to compete, except in dense, urban areas, and they do not feel they are competitive by getting customers to switch. He stated that the second map shows options that are starting to develop, such as fixed wireless, which at least provides some options.

Ms. Bohmke asked what is meant by "fixed wireless."

Mr. Rivkin-Fish explained that when you use your phone, it is not fixed, as you can walk around and still get connectivity from several different spectrums that are dedicated from licensed providers. He said that there are also bands that can be used for fixed wireless, which has an antenna that picks up a signal that is redistributed with a router and internal wiring or WiFi in the home. He noted that the earlier fixed wireless was provided with unlicensed spectrum, which means that there isn't a lot of interference in rural areas, but it also means there is uncertainty. He said that T-Mobile and others are reusing spectrum used for mobile to deliver a home product, so there is an antenna on the roof instead that provides some service. He stated that it wouldn't be terrific speeds, but for areas that are suffering and don't have competition, these options are always welcome.

Mr. Rivkin-Fish said that the County has been remarkably successful in developing partnerships and pursuing state grants, and there are also some federal opportunities—with the only one left being the USDA Reconnect grant, but Stafford is just not rural enough to be well-positioned for those. He emphasized that VATI is still the best option, and there are likely a few more waves of funding coming through the state, totaling in the billions, to be administered by state broadband offices. He said that it could take a few years, but there is a lot of hope that the gap could be closed completely. He stated that the target areas are the unserved areas, as well as underserved areas to the extent possible, encouraging the fixed wireless carriers to replace it with fiber. He noted that some of them were already doing that, as fixed wireless equipment was quite expensive to the end customer. He added that fiber provides much lower operational costs in addition to better speeds. He noted that whatever rules they adopt would require some finessing of this strategy.

Ms. Yeung stated that he is using “served,” “unserved,” and “underserved” interchangeably—and she wanted it to be clear that those definitions were not the same for everyone.

Mr. Rivkin-Fish explained that “unserved” areas, shown in orange, meant that those people can’t get reliable 25/3 service; “underserved” means they cannot get 100/20 service; and in this County, cable or fiber provide more than 100/20. He noted that this might not be possible if the provider hasn’t upgraded their cable coax infrastructure, but the served areas here are in good shape.

Ms. Yeung commented that the underserved areas are around Brooke Road and Hartwood, as well as with some long driveways, and she asked what the County was willing to pay to support individuals that have two and three acres to get connection. She also said she wanted to know how they were working with the schools that have towers and whether they are including areas where new schools or homes were going to be built that were all part of the strategic plan.

Mr. Cannon stated that the broadband plan was a plan within a plan, and phase two was to do an overall strategy for telecommunications, which includes wireless, government needs, and public safety radio system as well. He said that this would take into account locations and potential locations for cell towers where there are gaps and public safety needs. He also said that the state has about \$3 million allocated for a “long drop” program that providers register for with the Department of Housing and Community Development, with the resident in turn then applying for it. He stated that the County is looking at which providers have registered with the state, and they could potentially do a marketing effort and encourage citizens to apply. He noted that there was also a median income requirement.

Mr. Rivkin-Fish said there were also options to build on top of the state program, so the County could do a small addition with a modest County fund and an invite for provide companies and foundations to contribute. He stated that the disadvantage is that the money could be spent somewhere else, but the advantage is piggybacking on something already happening and the intelligence it provides by looking at what the state is providing.

Mr. Cannon noted that the Comcast 2022 grant that the County partnered with does include long drops, and within that service area, there are homes set back more than 200 feet; if the Board applies for the 2023 grant, it would be the same case.

Mr. Rivkin-Fish stated that he would review the recommendations for expansion strategies, including the long drop connectivity, adoption of “dig once” policies that facilitate putting in conduit when there are existing construction projects that have trenches. He said they also recommend having a dedicated Telecommunications Administrator to provide more focus on this, as staff is currently stretched very thin in trying to address internal government connectivity needs, broadband, and the looming area of broadband adoption. He stated that it doesn’t make sense to have broadband connectivity if people can’t afford it, and there is some state and federal funding to help resolve the equity gap.

Mr. Rivkin-Fish stated that next steps include submitting the VATI 2023 grant, overseeing Comcast's 2022 VATI grant in the western part of the County, awaiting more accurate FCC and state maps to further refine map areas, and continuing to work with other aspects of the comprehensive telecommunications plan and strategy.

Ms. Bohmke stated that they have some situations in the County where new homes are all wired for internet, but internet doesn't exist in the homes and the buyers go back to the builder to get help, who in turn comes to the County—so perhaps they need better or more enhanced communication around this issue. She said that these are often individual lots, not big subdivisions, and they could address this at a future date.

Mr. Cannon said that this sounds like something Planning should address as part of the approval process for new developments.

Ms. Vanuch mentioned that there are disclosures such as being in the Quantico Overlay Zone, and perhaps they could consider a non-access disclosure that revealed to the buyer that they do not have internet.

Mr. Cannon stated that this was a great idea, noting that having internet service adds about \$10K to the value of a home.

Mr. Vosburg said they could also work on the public information side of this, now that they have all the data and the maps—and the challenge would be making sure it is updated as companies run internet to different areas, but perhaps it could be integrated into GIS.

Ms. Yeung stated that this was what she had been referring to previously in terms of new homes and having developers be clear in their marketing on schools, infrastructure, and provisions such as internet.

Ms. Vanuch said that a few years ago, the Board had a strategic vision of increasing broadband accessibility, especially in areas such as Brooke, Hartwood, and Rock Hill. She stated that they've done a good job of communicating the VATI grants already received—and Andrew Spence was very effective in putting out communications plans so that people understand this is a really big project that is a partnership among federal, state, and local officials.

Mr. Vosburg stated that there was data that is good for them to share as well, with data showing that Stafford County is above average in Virginia and the U.S.

Ms. Bohmke said that regarding the map provided, she is surprised that the unserved area comes down along Potomac Creek and is almost at the tip of White Oak Road.

Mr. Cannon stated that Northern Neck Rural Electric, which serves that area, has a partnership with All Points Broadband—which received a \$10 million grant to do all the Northern Neck, including King George. He said that his understanding is that some of that area would be receiving fiber to the home, and he would check on that.

Ms. Vanuch asked that he disseminate that information to the Board when he got it, as Rock Hill and Hartwood had a hard time getting information when they moved forward with KGI.

3. DISCUSSION OF VIRGINIA TELECOMMUNICATIONS INITIATIVE (VATI) 2023 GRANT APPLICATION

Mr. Cannon stated that he would provide a summary of what the County has done with VATI grants in the past as well as what they were seeking approval for in the resolution to apply for the 2023 VATI grant. He reported that in 2020, the County applied with KGI as a co-applicant, which was the only viable provider willing to partner. He stated that KGI proposed doing the eastern part of the County, so they did Widewater and Marlborough Point, which included building a 150-foot tower on private property located on one of the highest points there. He said from there, they were able to serve 725 homes—625 in Stafford and 100 in King George. He stated that there have been mixed reviews, with some frustrated with the service and some happy with it, and not everyone has signed up. He noted that this has left some underserved areas of the County, and the definition has been changed by the FCC from the 25/3 speed at the time they applied. He noted that the grant had wrapped up, and they are in the closeout phase of that.

Mr. Cannon reported that the VATI 2022 grant was approved, and they were notified of an award from DHCD last December. He said the project would provide 661 homes with access to wireline broadband through Comcast's triple-play service of cable TV, broadband, and phone. He noted that the construction would start within the next few weeks, and DHCD had preauthorized Comcast to begin incurring soft costs. He said they were doing the engineering design work currently and were gearing up for construction as soon as the final paperwork is in to DHCD—with one outstanding document being reviewed by the County Attorney's Office. He said once they had that, they would receive the contract from DHCD that the Board had approved in July; Mr. Vosburg would then sign it, and the County would give Comcast authorization to begin construction. He referenced a map showing the VATI 2022 grant areas, which were mostly the Rock Hill and Hartwood areas.

Mr. Spence said that Mr. Cannon had handed over the communication process to Community Engagement to work with Comcast, and they have sent out quotes to the chair and Mr. English to approve, since the project falls in their areas. He said the communication would go out at the end of August or early September, and Comcast would be establishing a site where people can just check their address—and Comcast has felt the County could develop the videos to go out to residents, which would follow up as two videos over the next 18 months. He noted that the press release with the quotes mentioned would go out as joint with the County and Comcast.

Mr. Cannon reported that for the 2023 process, in early June, the Infrastructure Committee approved having the County issue an RFI to identify a partner and a project area where a provider could partner with the County to apply for a 2023 grant. He said they received five responses through the committee, which was comprised of County staff and his counterpart in the schools. He stated that they did a thorough review of all proposals and felt that Comcast was the best applicant and provided the most comprehensive plan in terms of reaching the unserved and underserved areas of the County. He said their project was proposing two 156-line extensions to reach 1,251 homes, and it was a \$10.2 million project with Comcast offering a 40%

match or \$4,092,000. He referenced maps that showed the line extensions in purple, noting that this fills in a lot of holes—taking care of about 1/3 of underserved homes in the County.

Ms. Bohmke said that Marlborough Point was getting service there and wondered why they chose that instead of going further into the Falmouth District or the Hartwood District off of Shackelford Well Road and other roads there.

Mr. Cannon explained that this was an open process in which each provider could propose what they wanted to, and he noted that Nathan Dougherty, Comcast Director of Government Affairs, is present. He said that he could do an overlay that shows what the 2022 project area includes and what the additional service would provide in each district.

Ms. Vanuch commented that they may not want to just take a company's word for it in terms of providing fiber, as there may be a major street where people are complaining that could be easily added to the project.

Mr. Cannon stated that it was a difficult question for him to answer, but Comcast knows their customer base and footprint better than anyone—and they looked at areas where there were gaps and no service.

Ms. Bohmke asked if they were approving this plan today, or just that they are applying for the grant.

Mr. Cannon responded that this map is what they are proposing, and there wouldn't be a lot of variation at this point.

Ms. Bohmke said that she didn't have enough information and time on the spot to stand up for that and say it was good for their constituents.

Ms. Gary stated that she has been working with staff on this since January and has been pressing hard on the importance of this, making sure that people in her district filled out the surveys that were sent out. She said that a lot of people have been calling and asking for service as well, noting that her neighborhood wasn't getting any lines because they banded together and got it themselves several years ago. She emphasized that she would like to know what spots still need broadband that would not be covered by this—but she would not want to hold up the work being done in applying for this. She commented that she hoped everyone would have done that work, but if not, she would like that information to get out as soon as possible.

Ms. Yeung commented that she has underserved constituents who cannot afford to have broadband in their homes even though the service might exist outside.

Ms. Vanuch said that was a different program.

Ms. Yeung stated that there were four carriers that responded and she wondered why they were only working with Comcast.

Mr. Cannon responded that there were five respondents.

Ms. Yeung said that she has Xfinity on her corner, Verizon is in the area, and Comcast is also present—and she didn't understand why they couldn't all come together to cover all the gaps. She stated that one area being covered is one thing, but she would like to see everyone covered.

Mr. Cannon explained that they had to follow an open bid process and received five responses—but Cox did not respond. He said they received responses from Verizon, Data Stream, Air Wireless, and All Points Broadband, with Comcast providing the only proposal that met all the requirements issued. He clarified that the County was proposing to put in \$1.3 million.

Ms. Yeung stated that before she did that, she would want to see the other areas covered also.

Ms. Bohmke said that there was a bit of a rub here in terms of serving their constituents and understanding the information presented. She asked if this had to be voted on today.

Mr. Cannon responded that it is time-sensitive, because the grant deadline is August 25.

Ms. Bohmke asked if Comcast could provide an overlay and perhaps have the Board vote at 7:00 p.m. She said that while Ms. Gary was at the table, no one called her and asked her to provide input and go over what the underserved and other areas are.

Mr. Cannon clarified that he had not had any conversation with Ms. Gary through this grant process, other than a brief conversation in the hallway.

Ms. Gary stated that her conversations had been with the County Administrator through Mr. Toigo, and that was because of her—not staff.

Ms. Vanuch said that the Board's bylaws indicate that items must come before the full Board, and everything must be equal across the whole Board.

Ms. Gary stated that she has not seen these maps before but has conveyed to the County Administrator and Mr. Toigo that her constituents were having difficulties, and she ensured that her constituents filled out the surveys.

Ms. Bohmke said she had no problem with that, and there had been some challenges as the new County Administrator came on board with Mike Smith as interim. She asked Mr. Dougherty of Comcast to explain the business model and why they were not serving more people in the Falmouth District south of Eskimo Hill Road.

Mr. Nathan Dougherty explained that Comcast responded to Stafford County's RFI on July 11 and gave a substantive presentation to the selection committee as a follow-up to that. He said that in terms of their approach, they have been talking about unserved and underserved—and his focus has been what is eligible for the VATI program, which has specific criteria. He stated that

Comcast's approach has been to find every eligible location in the County and present a proposal that met all those criteria. He said that what they are seeing is not the Comcast existing service area but the area they felt were eligible for the grant. He stated that their effort was to address every eligible location.

Ms. Bohmke said if she looks at the map and sees Marlborough Point, she wanted to know why those homes qualify more than those in another area.

Mr. Dougherty responded that in looking at available FCC data, this geography appeared to be eligible, which was confirmed by staff. He said it wasn't a "more or less" metric, as they are trying to capture every location. He noted that with the last grant, Comcast submitted all locations they felt were VATI eligible, and staff came back with a focus on specific areas of interest. He said that Comcast did a subsequent analysis to include a few more locations. He explained that the process was filtering out eligibility and ineligibility—not a process by which they were "selecting" certain areas.

Ms. Bohmke stated that it looks like 100% of everything on Marlborough Point south, and she found it odd that this area of the County or others didn't have more eligibility.

Ms. Vanuch said the Board would like to see where the fiber connectivity already exists, as she did not know that there was just one swath on Garrisonville Road that didn't have internet. She said that they just didn't want to be caught off-guard, as the Board wanted to understand any disconnection and other eligibility—and probably should have had several briefings leading up to this meeting.

Mr. Vosburg stated that on page 3 of the study presented prior to this item, it says that there are around 3,100 addresses that are unserved; this proposal from Comcast will bring 1,251 addresses into service. He said that when he mentioned that Stafford was in good shape with Broadband, that was what he meant—as there are roughly 1,800 addresses left, which is a significant reduction in the unserved population.

Ms. Vanuch said that's what they were trying to get at: where are those 1,800, and can they be service by Comcast, or do they have to have Cox.

Ms. Yeung said that her goal would be for those 1,800 to be served by someone, whether it's Comcast or someone else, and they have the TCC meetings for a reason.

Mr. Cannon stated that they have encouraged Cox to apply the previous round and this time, and they said they didn't have enough time to apply. He said that it is a business decision they make—and all the County can do is provide an open process and encourage them to apply.

Ms. Yeung asked Mr. Dougherty when they could only take on the 1,251.

Mr. Dougherty responded that Comcast took the data pulled from the FCC and what they know about their own service area, and they did not have access to additional data—but in Comcast's review of the FCC areas, they tried to capture every VATI-eligible address.

Ms. Gary pointed out that there is a recommendation to adopt a multi-year grant strategy to reach the County's unserved and underserved areas; just because they are applying for this grant doesn't mean they won't be applying for others. She said that they were perhaps getting too far into the weeds and should possibly get into the larger strategy—and it would be silly to hold up access for people if there is the ability to apply for a grant, just because it doesn't cover everything they have.

Mr. Cannon said that Matt Rowe in the GIS division could overlay what they know about Cox's footprint is, where Comcast's is, and where others are. He said they could see where this is filling in gaps.

Ms. Vanuch stated that they need to provide just a little more transparency, and she would like a map that shows who has coverage and where the 1,800 homes are that don't have it—with some explanation about the criteria and the future strategy.

Ms. Yeung commented that they also need to be clear and not give people false expectation, because if people did not meet the criteria now, they would not meet it next time unless the criteria changed.

Mr. Cannon said they can never predict when a company would apply to an RFI.

Ms. Vanuch asked that they work on the overlay and hopefully have it for their regular meeting.

Staff indicated that they could have it for 3:00 p.m.

Mr. Vosburg said when he talked about the 3,100 households, they have a 2022 VATI grant that would address 661 households—leaving 1,200 or less households that would not have internet coverage.

ADJOURNMENT

At 1:22 p.m., Chairman Vanuch adjourned the August 16, 2022 American Rescue Plan Act Work Session of the Stafford County Board of Supervisors.



Randal E. Vosburg
County Administrator


Crystal Vanuch
Chairman