

Broadband Advisory Council

Annual Report

December 2017

Broadband Advisory Council

Introductory Background

The Broadband Advisory Council was established as an advisory council, within the meaning of § 2.2-2100, in the executive branch of state government. The Council's purpose is to advise the Governor on policy and funding priorities to expedite deployment and reduce the cost of broadband access in the Commonwealth. The Council was created from a recommendation by the Broadband Roundtable, established by Governor Kaine in 2007, and was codified during the 2009 legislative session (HB2423). The Council's duties include:

- Monitor the broadband-based development efforts of other states and nations in areas such as business, education, and health;
- Advise the Governor, Secretary of Technology, and the General Assembly on policies and strategies related to making affordable broadband services available to every Virginia home and business;
- Monitor broadband-related activities at the federal level;
- Encourage public-private partnerships to increase the deployment and adoption of broadband services and applications;
- Annually report to the Governor and the Joint Commission on Technology and Science on the progress towards the goal of universal access for businesses and on the assessment of Commonwealth broadband infrastructure investments and utilization of Council-supported resources to promote broadband access;
- Periodically review and comment on the quality, availability, and accessibility of state-maintained or funded broadband resources and programs, including but not limited to: Virginia Resources Authority Act funding of the "Online Community Toolkit"; the Center for Innovative Technology's mapping and outreach initiatives; investments made through programs administered by the Department of Education, Department of Housing and Community Development, Department of Public Rail and Transportation, and the Tobacco Indemnification and Community Revitalization Commission; and
- Monitor regulatory and policy changes for potential impact on broadband deployment and sustainability in the Commonwealth.

The Broadband Advisory Council is comprised of 14 members: four delegates; 2 senators; Secretaries of Technology, Commerce and Trade, and Agriculture and Forestry; and representatives from Virginia Cable Telecommunications Association (VCTA), Virginia Telecommunications Industry Association (VTIA), Center for Rural Virginia, Virginia Chapter of WISPA, and local government. The council members are:

Delegate Kathy Byron (Chair)
Senator Frank Ruff (Vice Chair)
Delegate Jennifer Boysko
Delegate James Leftwich
Delegate Randy Minchew
Senator Charles Carrico
Secretary Karen Jackson

Secretary Basil Gooden
Secretary Todd Haymore
Ray LaMura, President of VCTA
Dumont Walton, Executive Director of VTIA
Christy Morton, Executive Director of the Center for Rural Virginia
James Carr, CEO of All Points Broadband
Jane Dittmar, Chair of the Albemarle County Board of Supervisors

Staff: Chuck Kirby (CIT), Caroline Luxhoj (CIT), Jean Plymale (CIT), Jeff Sharp (DLS)

Summary of 2017 Meetings

The Broadband Advisory Council met on May 31, 2017 in Richmond, Virginia. The Council heard presentations regarding public broadband funding and privately funded networks, the Department of Housing and Community Development's (DHCD) Virginia Telecommunications Initiative (VATI) grant, CenturyLink's Connect America progress, and CIT Broadband Activities.

On August 24, 2017 the Broadband Advisory Council held a Retreat in Forest, Virginia. During this Retreat, the Council focused on identifying broadband priorities in the Commonwealth, highlighting broadband barriers, and objectives for the Council to utilize as a basis for its recommendations to the Governor that focus on expediting deployment and reducing broadband costs.

The final Broadband Advisory Council meeting for 2017 was held on October 23, 2017 in Chesapeake, Virginia. The Council engaged in presentations from the Virginia Tobacco Region Revitalization Commission regarding its Last Mile Broadband Program, the City of Virginia Beach regarding its Hampton Roads Regional Broadband Strategy and Trans-Atlantic cables, and DHCD regarding the GO Virginia initiative and an update on the VATI grant. The Council also discussed opportunities for broadband-related legislation in the 2018 legislation session.

Priority and Recommendations

Based on thoughtful presentations made to the Council, and copious research reviewed, The Broadband Advisory Council advises the Governor that *the Commonwealth's top broadband priority should be expanding access to the unserved.*

To expedite deployment and reduce costs, the Council has identified a number of broadband barriers that currently affect the Commonwealth including: geography, affordability, fragmented permitting, fees and zoning, trenching, conduit related to bridges and tunnels, and pole attachment/make-ready fees. To address these barriers, the Broadband Advisory Council recommends the following to the Governor:

- Reduce cost to access
- Encourage Public-Private Partnerships
- Public funding:

- Emphasize cost-effectiveness with respect to other factors
 - Allocate in a way that does not compete with privately-financed infrastructure
 - Provider and technology neutral
 - Increase VATI funding and provide measurements for funded projects
- Reduce regulatory barriers
- Establish 'dig once' legislation
- Educate localities and citizens
 - Include broadband at the Rural Summit, VACO/VML Summits
 - Encourage economic developers to reach out to prospective businesses to help them meet their broadband needs
 - Conduct regional BAC meetings
- Ensure that state resources are devoted to the unserved
- Monitor federal opportunities

Conclusion

The Broadband Advisory Council takes its responsibility very seriously to advise the Governor on policy and funding priorities to expedite deployment and reduce the cost of broadband access in the Commonwealth.

By prioritizing broadband access to the unserved and ensuring that logistical barriers are addressed through a variety of policy and funding recommendations to the Governor, the Broadband Advisory Council believes that the Commonwealth will continue to be competitive by "Building A New Virginia Economy."