

Virginia Broadband Advisory Council

**2024 Annual Report
October 1, 2023 – September 30, 2024**

Introductory Background

In today's connected world, the societal importance and economic relevance of broadband is increasingly clear. Recognizing the need to provide all Virginians with broadband access, the Broadband Advisory Council ("the Council") was established pursuant to § 2.2-100 Code of Virginia, within the executive branch of the Commonwealth. The Council's purpose is to advise the Governor on policy and funding priorities in order to expedite deployment and reduce the cost of broadband access in the Commonwealth. The Council was established due to a recommendation by the Broadband Roundtable, established by Governor Kaine in 2007, and was codified during the 2009 legislative session (Chapter 818, 2009 Acts of Assembly).

This overview will provide an outline of the Council's duties, Council membership, broadband legislation passed, and a summary of the Broadband Advisory Council meetings between October 1, 2023 and September 30, 2024.

Council Duties

The Broadband Advisory Council was established to determine the Commonwealth's broadband goals and how best to achieve them. The Council is charged with the following duties per § 2.2-2699.4 Code of Virginia:

- Monitor the broadband-based development efforts of other states and nations in areas such as business, education, and health;
- Consult with the Department of Housing and Community Development to designate the unserved areas to receive funds.
- Advise the Governor, the Secretary of Commerce and Trade, 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 Region Revitalization Commission; and

- Monitor regulatory and policy changes for potential impact on broadband deployment and sustainability in the Commonwealth.

Council Membership

As prescribed by the § 2.2-2699.3 Code of Virginia, the Council consists of members representing various stakeholders in the Virginia broadband industry and the state legislature. The Broadband Advisory Council is comprised of 17 members. The Council consists of: four members of the House of Delegates, three members of the Senate, six non-legislative citizen members appointed by the Governor, one representative of the Virginia Cable Telecommunications Association, one representative of the Virginia Telecommunications Industry Association, one representative from local government recommended by the Virginia Municipal League and Virginia Association of Counties, one representative of the Virginia Wireless Internet Service Providers Association, one representative of a wireless service authority, one representative of the Virginia, Maryland and Delaware Association of Electric Cooperatives, the Executive Director of the Center for Rural Virginia, and three Secretaries as defined in Va. Code § 2.2-200 to be appointed by the Governor shall serve ex officio members.

At the end date of this report, council members are:

Delegate Charniele L. Herring – House of Delegates
Delegate James Leftwich - House of Delegates
Delegate Kannan Srinivasan – House of Delegates
Delegate Rodney T. Willett – House of Delegates
Senator Jennifer Boysko (Acting Chair) - Senate
Senator Ghazala Hashmi - Senate
Senator T. Travis Hackworth - Senate
Secretary of Commerce and Trade, Caren Merrick
Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry, Matthew Lohr
Kristie Helmick Proctor - Center for Rural Virginia
Steve Sandy – Local Government Representative (Franklin County)
Ray LaMura - Virginia Cable Telecommunications Association (VCTA)
Casey Logan - Virginia, Maryland and Delaware Association of Electric Cooperatives (VMDAEC)
Richard Schollmann - Virginia Telecommunications Industry Association (VTIA)
James Carr - Virginia Wireless Internet Service Providers Association (WISPA)
Christian Goodwin - Wireless Service Authority Representative

Meeting Minutes

Between October 1, 2023 and September 30, 2024 the Council met three (3) times (December 8th, January 9th, and August 16th) to discuss, deliberate, learn, and report on broadband issues and public policy as it relates to the broadband deployment interests of the Commonwealth. Minutes of each meeting are provided below:

December 8, 2023 Meeting Minutes

**BROADBAND ADVISORY COUNCIL
APPROVED MINUTES
December 8, 2023
10:00 AM
Virginia General Assembly Building
Room 500
201 N Ninth St.
Richmond, VA 23219
Virtual Option provided via Microsoft Teams**

Members Present

Senator Jennifer Boysko, Acting Chair
Senator Ghazala Hashmi
Delegate Thomas Wright, Jr.
Delegate James Leftwich
Secretary Matt Lohr
Ray LaMura
James Carr
Christian Goodwin
Kristie Proctor
Casey Logan
Steve Sandy
Richard Schollman

Members Absent

Secretary Caren Merrick
Senator Lynwood W. Lewis
Delegate David Reid

Call to Order	Senator Jennifer Boysko, Acting Chair of the Broadband Advisory Council, called the meeting to order at 10:01 a.m.
Roll Call	Chandler Vaughan, Senior Policy Analyst at the Office of Broadband, called the roll and stated that a quorum was present.
Approval of Minutes: August 28, 2023 Meeting	A motion was made and properly seconded to approve the minutes of the August 28, 2023 meeting of the Broadband Advisory Council. The motion passed to adopt the minutes as presented.
Broadband 101 Presentation	Dr. Tamarah Holmes and Office of Broadband staff presented a Broadband 101 Presentation, designed for new and existing legislators to learn more about Virginia's existing efforts to expand broadband access and close all aspects of the digital divide. Specific topics

	included: Broadband Advisory Council: Who and What; What is “Broadband”?; Why and Where are the Unserved?; What is Virginia doing about it?; How are the existing projects performing?; What’s coming next – the BEAD Program; Broadband Affordability and Adoption; Role of Legislators (Non-Legislative) & Resources.
Office of Broadband Updates	Tamara Holmes, Ph.D, and Office of Broadband Staff presented on Office of Broadband Updates. Unique to this presentation and not covered in the previous agenda item were an update on the Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Program implementation in the Commonwealth and an overview of the Virginia Digital Opportunity Plan, which was currently subject to an open public comment window.
Public Comment	No public comment was provided at the meeting
New Business	Steve Sandy provided comment that cellular deployment should be considered under the Virginia Telecommunication Initiative or under the Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment Program.
Adjournment	Upon a motion made and properly seconded, the meeting was adjourned.

January 9, 2024 Meeting Minutes

**BROADBAND ADVISORY COUNCIL
APPROVED MINUTES
January 9, 2024
10:00 AM
Patrick Henry Building (Governor’s Offices)
1111 E Broad Street,
East Reading Room, First Floor, Room 1035
Richmond, VA 23219
Virtual Option provided via Microsoft Teams**

Members Present

Senator Jennifer Boysko, Acting Chair
Senator Ghazala Hashmi
Delegate James Leftwich
Secretary Matt Lohr
Ray LaMura
James Carr
Kristie Proctor
Casey Logan
Steve Sandy
Richard Schollman

Members Absent

Secretary Caren Merrick
Senator Lynwood W. Lewis
Delegate David Reid
Delegate Thomas Wright, Jr.
Christian Goodwin

Call to Order	Senator Jennifer Boysko, Acting Chair of the Broadband Advisory Council, called the meeting to order at 10:01 a.m.
Roll Call	Chandler Vaughan, Senior Policy Analyst at the Office of Broadband, called the roll and stated that a quorum was present.
Approval of Minutes: August 28, 2023 Meeting	A motion was made and properly seconded to approve the minutes of the December 8, 2023 meeting of the Broadband Advisory Council. The motion passed to adopt the minutes as presented.
Legislative Preview of 2024 Session	Acting Chair Boysko provided an opportunity for all General Assembly Members in attendance, both virtual and in-person, to come before the Broadband Advisory Council to discuss their potential to-be-introduced legislation. Senator David Marsden provided an overview of his to-be-introduced Make Ready/Pole Attachment legislation to the Broadband Advisory Council.
Discussion of 2024 Session Legislative Items	Council members discussed Senator Marsden’s to-be-introduced legislation, including asking questions of Senator Marsden about the bill.

Office of Broadband Updates	Chandler Vaughan, Senior Policy Analyst in the Office of Broadband provided brief verbal updates on the Office’s work, including continued engagement with the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) on review and approval of Volume 2 of Virginia’s Initial Proposal under the Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment Program, ongoing work under the BEAD challenge process, a summary of FY2024 Virginia Telecommunication Initiative applications received, an update on guidelines released and soon to be released for public comment, and the posting of Virginia’s Digital Opportunity Plan as submitted to NTIA.
Public Comment	Several representatives of Virginia’s electric cooperatives spoke against potential legislation to be introduced in the 2024 General Assembly Session – addressing a wide variety of concerns on potential legislation in the 2024 General Assembly Session, as well as providing information regarding the operation of electric cooperative networks. These representatives include: Gary Wood of Central Virginia Electric Cooperative, John Hewa of Rappahannock Electric Cooperative, Chris Botulinski of BARC Electric Cooperative, Jeff Ahearn of Craig Botetourt Electric Cooperative, Jason Carter of Shenandoah Valley Electric Cooperative, Ron White of Southside Electric Cooperative, Kyle Allwine of Northern Neck Electric Cooperative, and David Lipscomb of Mecklenburg Electric Cooperative.
New Business	Ray LaMura provided comment regarding the state requiring broadband providers to relocate infrastructure and the inappropriateness of requiring broadband providers to incur the cost of such state-required relocation. Steve Sandy provided comment that cellular deployment to areas without coverage should be considered for state investment.
Adjournment	Upon a motion made and properly seconded, the meeting was adjourned.

August 16, 2024 Meeting Minutes

**BROADBAND ADVISORY COUNCIL
UNAPPROVED MINUTES
August 16, 2024
10:00 AM
Fredericksburg Branch Library Theater
1201 Caroline Street
Fredericksburg VA 22401
Virtual Option provided via Microsoft Teams**

Members Present

Tamarah Holmes, Ph.D.
 Delegate Herring
 Delegate Willett
 Delegate Srinivasan
 Senator Boysko
 Casey Logan
 Rich Schollman
 Senator Hackworth
 Steve Sandy
 Jimmy Carr
 Ray LaMura
 Delegate Leftwich
 Kristie Proctor

Members Absent

None

Call to Order	Senator Jennifer Boysko, Acting Chair of the Broadband Advisory Council, called the meeting to order at 10:07 a.m.
Roll Call	Chandler Vaughan, Associate Director at the Office of Broadband, called the roll and stated that a quorum was present.
Approval of Minutes: January 9, 2024 Meeting	A motion was made and properly seconded to approve the minutes of the January 9, 2024, meeting of the Broadband Advisory Council. The motion passed to adopt the minutes as presented.
General Remarks	Acting Chair Boysko provided an opportunity opening remarks, to come before the Broadband Advisory Council. Dennis Clark, Librarian of Virginia, advocated on behalf of the library system as a longstanding beacon and community institution which advances digital equity and access across the state. Bryan Horn, VA Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) provided remarks on the recognition Virginia has received in efforts to bridge digital divide (e.g. BEAD, Makeready, Digital Opportunity).
Overview of Discussion	Tamarah Holmes Ph.D., Director of the Office of Broadband provided brief verbal updates on the Office’s work, including last-mile deployment program the Virginia Telecommunication Initiative (VATI), Broadband

	<p>Equity and Access Deployment (BEAD) program, and Digital Opportunity. Detailed how we are moving slowly from infrastructure to affordability and adoption of broadband via Digital Equity administered through National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA).</p>
Office of Broadband Updates	<p>Caroline Luxhoj, VATI Program Manager, presented on: historical funding of the program (FY17-FY23), the risk determination process in light of new language added to FY2025 and FY2026 biennium budget, and the most recent round of awarded programs announced by Governor Youngkin this past July.</p> <p>Chandler Vaughan, Associate Director of the Office of Broadband presented on other initiatives to streamline federal project delivery. Utilizing FCC’s 214 process to take defaulting projects under CAF-2 and RDOF and leverage the transfer process to keep federal dollars in Virginia and deliver connectivity to unserved regions.</p> <p>Chadler Vaughan, Associate Director of the Office of Broadband provided an overview of the Virginia Make Ready Initiative (VMRI) regarding key budget language for \$30,000,000 to provide supplements to eligible FY2022 VATI projects for make-ready costs regarding those determined to be at-risk for completion by December 31, 2026. He also provided an overview of federal last-mile deployment program, BEAD, to close the availability gap because “access to affordable, reliable high-speed broadband is essential to full participation in society.”</p> <p>Kalya Bravo, Intern in the Office of Broadband, provided a high-level overview of Virginia Digital Opportunity Initiatives: (1) Virginia Affordability and Adoption Planning Grant Program; (2) State Digital Equity Capacity Grant Program; (3) Digital Equity Competitive Grant Program. VAAPG helps cities, counties, and tribal governments understand broadband affordability and adoption needs in their jurisdictions, better preparing them to address these needs.</p> <p>Chris Glover, Asisstant Director for IT, at Central Rappahannock Regional Library presented on the technology timeline of early broadband extending to the contemporaneous moment.</p>
Public Comment	<p>EJ Scott, Chair of Virginia Economic Justice Committee of the NAACP, wants to inquire and ensure we are addressing equity in the advancement of broadband. Ms. Scott asked the following:</p> <p>Any demographics for the survey?</p> <p>Are there parameters set for low-cost options? What might be low-cost to you, may not be to others?</p> <p>Quality of connection to the home once established?</p>
Adjournment	<p>Upon a motion made and properly seconded, the meeting was adjourned at 12:01pm.</p>