Henderson County
BROADBAND TASKFORCE
March 1, 2022

The Taskforce held its first meeting last Tuesday at 6:00 p.m. in the Historic Courthouse Community Room.

Taskforce Members	Present	Not in Attendance
Commissioner Daniel Andreotta	√	
Commissioner David Hill	√	
David Davidson - Citizen	√	
Jason Alfrey – Henderson County Public Schools	√	
Sara Nichols – LOSRC	√	
Jimmy Brissie – Henderson County Emergency Management	√	
Johnny Duncan – Henderson County Sheriff's Office	√	

Providers Present – ERC, Charter, Vyve, Optimum, Heights Tower, Comporium

Also present: Chris Todd, Business & Community Development Director, and Grayson Taylor, Planner

Public Comments:

The taskforce heard from 15 members of the public wishing to comment. The comments generally ranged from lack of quality to service, to lack of service entirely to their residences. Many residents echoed concerns regarding the overwhelming need to have quality broadband service in order to adequality participate in public/social events, education, and workspaces.

Policy Overview:

North Carolina is putting ~$1 billion of ARPA funds (and $30 million of state funds) towards broadband and digital inclusion. Goals of these programs will be to get 98% of North Carolina at least 100/20 Mbps.

- Rural Digital Opportunity Fund – 2019 Reverse Auction
- GREAT Grant- $350M (**APPLCATIONS BY PROVIDER DUE APRIL 4TH**)
    - Only $8M can be provided to Henderson County
- Completing Access to Broadband (CAB)- $400M
- Stop Gap Solutions- $90M
- Make Ready Accelerator (Pole Replacement)- $100M

Next Steps and Outcomes:

The Taskforce recommended County Commissioners and staff to work with providers to determine if the provider applications for the GREAT grant should be supported financially by the County. The providers

stated they would have a stronger application for the GREAT Grant if they were to receive funding assistance from the County.   The use of ARPA funds increases the score the provider would receive if the county were to sponsor an application. An additional three points would be earned by the providers if the county was to provide any level of financial support with the use of ARPA funds. The County Commissioners would need to dedicate these funds during their midmonth March meeting to meet the application deadline for the providers.

The Taskforce should determine processes for reviewing future funding for items such as the CAB Grant to provide the County Commissioners with a policy direction regarding these types of grants.

A second meeting has been scheduled for April 12th as a follow-up to GREAT Grant applications and other potential subjects regarding broadband expansion.