

AGRICULTURE, PLANNING, TOURISM & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES – APRIL 19, 2022

AGRICULTURE, PLANNING, TOURISM & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MEMBERS

PRESENT: Griffith, O'Brien, Shaw, Skellie, Ferguson

AGRICULTURE, PLANNING, TOURISM & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MEMBERS

ABSENT: Campbell, Hicks

SUPERVISORS: Hall, Henke, Nolan

Debra Prehoda, Clerk of the Board

Roger Wickes, County Attorney

Al Nolette, County Treasurer

Melissa Fitch, County Administrator

AGENDA AS PRESENTED IN COMMITTEE NOTICE:

- 1) Call to Order
- 2) Accept Minutes – March 22, 2022
- 3) Broadband Updates
- 4) Other Business
- 5) Adjournment

Chairman Griffith called the meeting to order at 1:07 P.M. in the Supervisors Chamber and via zoom.

A motion to accept the minutes of the March 22, 2022 meeting was moved by Mr. O'Brien, seconded by Messrs. Skellie and Ferguson, and adopted.

Laura Oswald, Economic Development Director, addressed the following item:

- **BROADBAND** – Displayed the Washington County Broadband Status, April 2022, handout attached. This handout is where the County is going to be once the final installations from the Broadband for All Program is completed. The last of the providers finishing up is Slic and it looks like their completion will be delayed a little longer probably mid-May and that impacts towns in the southern end of the County, Jackson, Salem, Greenwich, and Cambridge areas. They are working hard but impacted by the supply chain problems getting materials. There have been approximately 11,000 new installation in the last five years and Spectrum was already in the more densely populated areas of the County. Estimating the remaining unserved by scrubbed ECC data is between 1200 and 1500 households. New York State invested about \$19M in Washington County which generated about 4300 new passes. The Broadband for All that was deployed cost approximately \$4,500 per household. Using an average of \$5,000 per household to get approximately 1500 new connections the County would need \$7M to \$10M in funding to get to the 98% to 99% of the county served. The Economic Development Director stated we are doing better than she thought we were going to be at the end of this funding and thanks to Slic more connections were made than they were subsidized for. Now how does the County figure out how to get \$10M in order to get these remaining unserved some level of service. In the State budget, the DOT fiber fee was repealed which has a huge impact on us because that was contributing significantly to the operating cost of the provider which was inhibiting them from offering service in remote areas where it was long distances from the home. She filed a request with Congresswoman Stefanik office requesting \$1M in assistance for broadband.

There have been discussions of using the ARP (American Rescue Plan) money as a match to get more broadband deployed across the county. She suggested possibly having the County match the town's ARP money which is eligible to use for broadband with the towns that do not have a huge number of connections to get complete service. This would require reaching out to providers

to get costs. Her goal right now is not losing momentum and see additional connections over the next couple of years as we wait for funding to become available. Through the State budget, a program was created called CONNECT ALL – subsidiary of Empire Development with \$300,000 State funding and \$1B through federal funding with about \$1.4B to focus on four programs – fiber at 100 download and 20 upload, Connect All municipal assistance program - supporting of municipality owned broadband, and fund innovative/technology to deploy fiber and digital equity. \$1.4B in funding but don't know how money will be distributed to programs and developing the programs is going to take time. The first release of funding will be for planning and the programs will not be released until the State has a better number of unserved and that could be in 2026. That is the reason she wants to continue to look for ways to make new connections and take advantage of funding as it comes along. In the short term, how to keep the momentum going and make additional connections. Does the county want to use some ARP funds to match town funds? She needs \$10M for these connections. State resources are some years out. The County earmarked about \$3.2 in ARP funds. The towns ARP funds are also lost revenue, unrestricted revenue, so they could use some of that funding.

The Economic Development Director stated if anybody is aware of any award that went to Hughes Net or another provider and they came back and said they could not provide broadband then she feels it is reasonable to go back to the Broadband for All office and request some of the leftover money because the provider could not deliver and reassign that award to another provider. Mr. O'Brien thanked the Economic Development Director for all her efforts with broadband.

OTHER BUSINESS:

- State Budget:
 - Short Term Rental – The short-term rental which would have encapsulated both the retail sales tax and tax collection agreements did not make it into the State budget. She reached out to VRBO to discuss reopening the discussions.
 - New Funding in State Budget – New funding for small businesses and businesses that started up during the pandemic, Fast NY will provide funding to make sites shovel ready to enhance economic development, Downtown Revitalization Initiative funded at \$100M and added another \$100M for a program called New York Forward which will be for smaller amounts to towns and villages, arts recovery funding and \$250M for Restore NY – municipal application for abandoned vacant or derelict buildings with funding for demolishing and reconstructing – potential partnership and redevelopment and requires 10%. CFAs will open early May through July. Some funding out there this year that you might not see again for a while so the Economic Development Director encouraged the Supervisors to think about would the town needs and she is willing to discuss funding options.
- Unknown where in the process that the occupancy and sales tax got sidelined.
- PACE Program (presentation last month) – The Treasurer stated the presentation referenced a section of General Municipal Law and that program has been in there a while and it lays out how a county does this if a county wants to do it. The law allows the county to run the program for residential properties. A local law would be required and it is done through a line on the tax bill. The Treasurer would be interested in talking to some of the counties that were listed in last month's presentation that are already in the program; positive and negative experiences. The Economic Development Director will reach out to Warren County.

The meeting adjourned at 2:05 P.M.

Debra Prehoda, Clerk Washington County Board of Supervisors

Washington County Broadband Status, April 2022

Number Housing Units (census)	Town	Grand Total New Passings since ~ 2017	~ Remaining unserved by scrubbed ECC Data
1890	Argyle	696	157
893	Cambridge	618	58
612	Dresden	566	0
1037	Easton	595	98
2048	Fort Ann	559	128
2614	Fort Edward	443	8
2777	Granville	826	150
2282	Greenwich	610	16
439	Hampton	489	38
942	Hartford	451	100
980	Hebron	1073	15
1147	Jackson	303	180
5862	Kingsbury	388	41
645	Putnam	818	17
1362	Salem	783	88
1533	White Creek	609	42
1935	Whitehall	782	29
28,998	Totals	10,609	1,162
			~1200 to 1500

Notes:

- * ECC measured unserved as more than 500' distant from mapped infrastructure, number of unserved will vary if distance other than 500' is used as definition
- * Definition of unserved is speeds of 25Mbps download and 3Mbps upload
- * ECC did not map Villages; there may be some unidentified unserved in these populated areas
- * Despite efforts, some unserved addresses may not have been captured as of yet
- * List of unserved addresses will be updated as new information is available

~1200 to 1500 households currently estimated with no broadband speed internet service