

Board of County Commissioners

Agenda Request

Date of Meeting: February 1, 2010

Date Submitted: January 29, 2010

To: Honorable Chairman and Members of the Board

From: Benjamin H. Pingree, County Administrator
Jennifer Langston, Special Projects Coordinator

Subject: Board Approval of a Resolution to Participate in North Florida Broadband Authority's broadband initiative.

Statement of Issue:

This agenda item seeks Board Approval of a Resolution to Participate in North Florida Broadband Authority's broadband initiative.

Background:

Wakulla County was recently contacted by a representative of the North Florida Broadband Authority to gauge interest in participating with the NFBA. The NFBA is a government entity consisting of 14 counties and 8 cities across North Florida.

NFBA

The NFBA was formed by the method which allows for governments to create a single entity by inter-local agreements. The assets provided from the federal government are not to be owned or controlled by commercial interest. It will be a utility-like infrastructure similar to sewer, water, and electrical companies, but focused on Middle Mile broadband. The following northern Florida counties are included in the region: Baker, Bradford, Columbia, Dixie, Gilchrist, Hamilton, Jefferson, Lafayette, Levy, Madison, Putnam, Suwannee, Taylor, and Union for the purpose of providing the first-ever, and only open, ubiquitous, Middle Mile access to broadband Internet services for both private entities and public institutions in the underserved areas of northern Florida. NFBA is composed of mostly counties in the 14-county RACEC (Rural Area of Critical Economic Concern). The goal of the NFBA is to deliver up to 1,000 times the existing capacity to these counties within the stipulated 3-year time frame.

The NFBA submitted an application for funding under the Broadband Technology Opportunities Program (BTOP) and Broadband Initiatives Program (BIP) as part of the 2009 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). The NFBA project will build a new Middle Mile broadband infrastructure, which will extend the high speed internet backbone capacity to local last-mile providers in order to serve vital public sector services and private sector commercial customers. The NFBA has received notice of advancement to phase II tier of eligibility in the State of Florida and eligible to move onto the second tier inline to receive ARRA funding.

What is the network's capacity? How many people will it serve?

The NFBA network will deliver up to 1 Gbps capacity throughout the region – up to 600 times the current capacity available to public and private entities in the region – well within the stipulated 3-year time frame. This network will provide capacity and reach to cover more than 154,000

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households, and 26,893 businesses. In addition, the project will provide the potential to connect to 1,573 critical facilities, and 265 health care entities, according to the Florida Agency for Health Care Administration. The NFBA Middle Mile project will spur additional private investment in Last Mile infrastructure as a result of extending the large capacity network to reach the entire geographic region. Redundant, multi-megabit broadband access will be made available to critical governmental (first responder) services, as well as to local internet service providers which will result in increased economic investment by existing and relocating companies to the region. Recently, the NFBA issued an RFQ-for Project/Construction Management and Project Engineering Services for Fixed Wireless Broadband Network.

Who will benefit?

In addition, the NFBA project will greatly expand broadband access to public safety/first responder agencies. Specifically, the project design incorporates a secure multi-megabit connection for intranet and internet connectivity. The network will give public safety organizations the ability to leverage vertical assets while its architecture accommodates the likely future deployment of fleet mobile broadband connectivity.

What other benefits are expected from this project?

The IP-based system has been designed to allow for secure, prioritized LAN connectivity including the potential ability to interface land mobile radios (LMRs) directly into the NFBA IP network. Further, this IP based system will be the groundwork for the recently allocated 700 MHz spectrum data network of the future. This feature, which will allow first responders to make voice calls and talk groups from LMR systems and new 700 MHz data systems to anywhere in the world, means that emergency relief efforts can be quickly coordinated in response to catastrophic events, such as flooding, tropical storms, hurricanes, and power outages, which are common to the north Florida region. This project will also greatly stimulate the demand for economic growth and job creation. For example, the number of employees to be hired directly for this project within the 14-county area is estimated at more than 100 over the next five years. The jobs created through indirect growth and expansion of businesses is likely to many times that number. These will be high technology network and IT engineering positions, along with call center, customer service and administrative positions.

Previous Efforts

- Wakulla County previously sought broadband ARRA funding with our regional partners including the Florida League of Cities, private vendors, and local government entities to maximize local government technologies to cost effectively engage in progressive technology in a sustainable manner that may not otherwise be affordable. The projects consisted of shared programs and applications allowing local governments the ability to choose relevant solutions addressing each community's needs.
- Discussions have been held with working with the Big Bend Regional Healthcare Information Organization to facilitate the sharing of patient data between two of three targeted healthcare entities in Tallahassee. Its focus is on healthcare technology and the

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services to facilitate the sharing and portability of healthcare and the integration of additional clinical data (i.e. labs, radiology, etc.)

Analysis:

This agenda item seeks Board approval of a resolution in support of joining the NFBA. Approval of the Resolution will serve as Wakulla County's formal request to participate with the NFBA to enter in to an inter-local agreement with the regional partners. The County is required to pass a resolution approving execution of the inter-local agreement at a County Commission meeting in order to join the Authority. The NFBA Board of directors must then vote to accept the County into the Authority's membership. The next NFBA Board of Directors meeting will be on February 17th, and will discuss allowing Wakulla County to participate in the Authority. Due to an approaching second tier ARRA application deadline, it is necessary for the Authority to receive communications from Wakulla County in moving forward.

Wakulla County government, businesses, residents, and citizens would benefit with the addition of broadband high speed internet services. Many areas of the County are not able to obtain affordable broadband services in the County. High speed internet access is limited to the areas serving local cable, cellular, and telephone subscribers. The network design for Wakulla County has not been designed at this time, the size and footprint of the service delivery area is uncertain at this time and will be contingent upon the amount of funding received.

There are no costs for Wakulla County to join NFBA. Funding for this project is expected to come from grants, and state/federal funding. By joining this authority, it enables Wakulla County to join the regional partners in obtaining additional funding for rural broadband infrastructure

Summary

Staff is recommending approval of a resolution to formally express interest in participating with the NFBA in an effort to bring broadband services to Wakulla County. Should the NFBA allow for Wakulla County to participate, a future agenda item, and presentation, would take place for the Board's benefit and approval. Membership into the NFBA includes the ability to appoint a member to serve on the Board of Directors pursuant to the Inter-local Agreement establishing the Authority.

Options:

1. Approve the Resolution
2. Do Not Approve the Resolution
3. Board direction.

Recommendation:

Option #1.

Attachments:

1. Resolution
2. Interlocal Agreement

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3. NFBA Map