



Chatham County, NC

Legislation Text

File #: 23-4740, **Version:** 1

Vote on a request authorizing the County Manager to execute Growing Rural Economies with Access to Technology (GREAT) Grant Agreements between the State of North Carolina, Chatham County, and Connect Holdings II LLC d/b/a Brightspeed for extension of broadband to unserved areas of the County. County match of \$350,000.

Action Requested: Vote on a request authorizing the County Manager to execute Growing Rural Economies with Access to Technology (GREAT) Grant Agreements between the State of North Carolina, Chatham County, and Connect Holdings II LLC d/b/a Brightspeed for extension of broadband to unserved areas of the County. County match of \$350,000.

Introduction & Background: On August 30, 2022, we were notified that the NC Department of Information Technology (NCDIT) had awarded the Growing Rural Economies with Access to Technology (GREAT) Grant to Connect Holding II LLC d/b/a Brightspeed. They were granted \$4,000,000 to extend broadband to 1,914 households and businesses in Chatham County. This grant award requires a match of \$1,861,793. As part of the scoring for the grant, NCDIT gave additional points if the local government participates in the match amount. Chatham County proposed a contribution of \$350,000 from American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds for this match.

Discussion & Analysis: Attached is a proposed resolution authorizing the County Manager to sign the three-party agreement between NC DIT, Connect Holding II LLC d/b/a Brightspeed, and Chatham County. The agreement is also attached.

How does this relate to the Comprehensive Plan: The lack of reliable highspeed internet access in the rural areas of the county has been a notable issue of concern for years. This was only exacerbated with the impacts associated with COVID-19. These impacts cannot be fully enumerated; however, the capacity to adapt to these impacts was measured, in large part, by the access one had to reliable highspeed internet. These impacts were realized by businesses and employees, teachers and students, medical providers and their patients, and many more. Becoming more resilient by adapting to emerging threats, such as the COVID-19 global pandemic, is one of the several objectives specified in Plan Chatham. Greater deployment of broadband access throughout the county, particularly in those areas that have slow to no internet access, can greatly mitigate these impacts, and provide the community with a greater capacity to adapt to them.

Budgetary Impact: \$350,000 from ARPA for Broadband.

Recommendation: Vote on a request authorizing the County Manager to execute Growing Rural Economies with Access to Technology (GREAT) Grant Agreements between the State of North Carolina, Chatham County, and Connect Holding II LLC d/b/a Brightspeed for extension of broadband to unserved areas of the County. County match of \$350,000.