



Monterey County

Item No.

Board Report

Board of Supervisors
Chambers
168 W. Alisal St., 1st Floor
Salinas, CA 93901

Legistar File Number: A 22-220

May 24, 2022

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Receive a progress report and the proposed Salinas Valley Five Cities Joint Powers Authority (JPA) agreement from the Information Technology Department, in response to Board Referral #2022.09, to explore the potential of creating a Salinas Valley Five Cities JPA to develop the broadband services by all the communities and areas represented by the JPA, and to provide further directions including authorizing the proposed JPA agreement, providing initial funding and closing the referral.

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the Board of Supervisors:

It is recommended that the Board of Supervisors:

- a. Receive the Information Technology Department report outlined below in response to Board Referral #2022.09;
- b. Authorize the proposed JPA agreement and provide initial funding of \$25,000 per year for three years;
- c. Close the Board Referral #2022.09;
- d. Provide further direction, as appropriate.

SUMMARY:

On February 8, 2022, the Information Technology Department (ITD) was assigned Board Referral #2022.09 for the purpose of exploring the potential of creating a Salinas Valley Five Cities JPA. On February 10, 2022, ITD was provided a proposed draft of a JPA agreement, created by City of Gonzales. On March 22, 2022, ITD presented to the Board its suggested changes to the proposed agreement draft. Board directed ITD to provide suggested modifications to the agreement. Subsequently, ITD and County Counsel provided suggested changes that were approved by all parties.

ITD supports the broadband JPA initiative which enables cities and the County to work together with a collective vision and cost sharing. ITD believes that the open-access network approach that leverages federal and state funds could lower subscriber cost and contribute to the County's already-existing broadband program.

An initial County contribution of \$25,000 is required per year for three years, which includes fiscal years 2022-2023, 2023-2024 and 2024-2025. The County contribution in future years has not yet been determined.

ANALYSIS:

Background:

California is facing a digital crisis, with far too many residents left without adequate and affordable

broadband service. The COVID-19 pandemic has brought the lack of reliable and affordable internet service to the forefront due to the necessity of distance learning and remote working, tele-healthcare and remote access to employment, economic and human services. The Salinas Valley is no exception. There are numerous areas that prior to the pandemic were uncovered or inadequately covered. It would be beneficial for cities and the County to work together and share costs to plan and implement the development of community broadband and/or high-speed internet.

Project Description:

On February 8, 2022, the Information Technology Department (ITD) was assigned Board Referral #2022.09 for the purpose of exploring the potential of creating a Salinas Valley Five Cities Joint Powers Authority (JPA). On February 10, 2022, ITD was provided a proposed draft of a JPA agreement, created by City of Gonzales.

On March 22, 2022, ITD presented to the Board its suggested changes to the proposed agreement draft. ITD recommended that as part of the JPA agreement, all parties to the potential JPA agreement should build the network expeditiously and leverage existing infrastructure where feasible, to help the unserved, underserved and underprivileged communities. ITD recommended that specific projects and vendor names should be removed from the proposed JPA draft and keep the agreement general. The JPA could benefit the entire County if other districts or entities join. The Board directed ITD to provide suggested modifications to the agreement. Subsequently, ITD and County Counsel provided suggested changes that were approved by all parties.

ITD supports the JPA initiative which would enable cities and the County to work together with a collective vision and cost sharing. ITD believes that the open-access network approach that leverages federal and state funds could lower subscriber cost and contribute to the County's already-existing broadband initiative. Additional discussion regarding this topic is covered by the attached Board presentation.

Estimated Project Cost:

County's initial contribution will be \$25,000 per year for three years, which include fiscal years 2022-2023, 2023-2024 and 2024-2025. Additional County staffing cost would likely be needed. ITD will return to the Board with estimated additional costs if there are any.

Staffing Level Estimate:

Additional staffing may be needed. ITD will return to Board with a staffing request if there is any.

Departmental Challenges:

The community broadband challenge is about coming up with a sustainable and executable public and private partnership model that will benefit Monterey County residents for the long term, while producing quick and measurable outcomes. As such, ITD will continue working on the approved community broadband projects and deliver community broadband services to County constituents in accordance the Board's prior direction to do so and the effort currently underway with the broadband RFP.

Proposed Response Date:

ITD will provide the Board with updates as needed.

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS STRATEGIC INITIATIVES:

The pandemic has underscored the critical utility of broadband infrastructure. From the homework gap and workforce adaptation to essential healthcare services and e-commerce, broadband is now the keystone to our nation’s response to the global pandemic and imperative to building resilient and future-ready communities. The lack of reliable broadband is a major economic barrier and a leading driver of socioeconomic inequality.

County’s goal is to ensure that every resident in Monterey County, regardless of their circumstances, could access broadband. The ability to do so will pay dividends far beyond the current crisis we find ourselves in. With unprecedented federal and state funding that will soon be allocated to address the digital divide and expand broadband access throughout California, including federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding, a record state budget allocation this year, there is an immediate need for local governments, including the Board of Supervisors, cities, school districts, special districts, universities and other community partners and institutions, to create a governance structure to better facilitate regional strategy, collaboration and partnerships on expanding broadband access and closing the digital divide throughout Monterey County.

X Economic Development

Administration

X Health & Human Services

X Infrastructure

Public Safety

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Approved by:

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Attachments:

Board presentation

Board Referral No. # 2022.09