

**Establishing A Broadband Policy For The County Of Ulster**

Referred to: The Economic Development, Tourism, Housing, Planning & Transit Committee (Chairman Briggs and Legislators Allen, Archer, Litts, Maloney, Maio, and Wishnick)

Legislator Lynn Archer offers the following:

WHEREAS, closing the Digital Divide is vital to the economic prosperity, educational growth and quality of life for residents in Ulster County; and

WHEREAS, the Ulster County Legislature believes that in order to compete in today's digital world that high-speed Internet access – referred to generically as “broadband” which includes both wireline and wireless technologies – is an essential 21<sup>st</sup> Century infrastructure that will enhance economic competitiveness, improve productivity and access to education, decrease impacts on the environment and increase advancement opportunities for our residents; and

WHEREAS, many Ulster County residents and businesses currently are hampered by the lack of access to Broadband and the data transfer speeds necessary to support today and tomorrow's business and educational models; in fact, some of our more rural areas do not have any access to wireline and/or wireless and in some cases areas that are reported to have wireline internet do not; and

WHEREAS, broadband access is a multi-faceted economic development engine; consumer access drives entrepreneurship, increases education and healthcare access, contributes to environmental conservation, and equalizes economic opportunities between urban and rural areas; institutional access to high-speed broadband attracts new business and capital investment, increases innovation and creates more jobs; and

WHEREAS, broadband technologies can be used to update and increase effectiveness of emergency response, law enforcement, and other public security and safety services, to better meet the needs of our first responders and residents in times of crisis; and

WHEREAS, by harnessing the increased productivity derived from expanding broadband throughout Ulster County we promote online access to government, its services and functions; enable distance learning and access to online textbooks; and provides increased quality of life for all residents; and

WHEREAS, the Ulster County Legislature has determined that a plan for and to facilitate deployment of Broadband across the county, especially in rural parts of the county without current access, as critical infrastructure, is comparable with other essential infrastructure such as water, sewer, and transportation, which are needed for economic development; and

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WHEREAS, there is significant State and Federal funding available for expansion of high speed broadband and that access to such funding requires a policy of support and plan of research and implementation; now therefore be it

RESOLVED, that the Ulster County Legislature hereby establishes a policy to develop a comprehensive Broadband strategy that covers the current and future needs of its residents, including those in rural areas, and major sectors within the county, Agriculture, Business, Education, Government, Healthcare, Public Safety and Utilities; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Ulster County Legislature hereby requests that the County Executive develop a plan in furtherance of this policy, and the plan should include a one year, two year and five year plus proposal for broadband expansion into areas that do not have access and improvement in service in other areas based on the collective needs of the residents of Ulster County and in the sectors outlined above,

and move its adoption

ADOPTED BY THE FOLLOWING VOTE:

AYES:

NOES:

Passed Committee: The Economic Development, Tourism, Housing, Planning & Transit on \_\_\_\_\_.

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

NONE