



CITY OF BANNING STAFF REPORT

TO: CITY COUNCIL

FROM: Douglas Schulze, City Manager

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MEETING DATE: June 11, 2024

SUBJECT: Appoint Two Council Members to the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) Local Agency Technical Assistance (LATA) Broadband Feasibility Grant Stakeholders Committee for FY 2024/2025 and 2025/2026

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the City Council appoint a committee to consist of two members from the City Council to participate in the Broadband Feasibility Grant Stakeholders meeting.

BACKGROUND:

The California Public Utilities Commission (“CPUC”) has established Local Agency Technical Assistance (“LATA”) grants to “support tribes and local agencies in their efforts to expand broadband service to unserved and underserved Californians.” Funding from LATA grants is intended for planning work that will facilitate high-speed broadband infrastructure projects.

High-speed and reliable broadband services, generally defined as meeting or exceeding symmetrical 100 Mbps download and upload speeds, are currently unavailable to eastern parts of the City of Banning (“City”) and in current and future development areas. The latest census data shows that the City’s median household income is among the lowest in Riverside County at \$42,274, 58 percent less than the median County income of \$73,260 in 2019. According to the 2016-2020 U.S. Census, more than 6,400 Banning residents do not have reliable broadband access. The overarching goal of this feasibility study is to enable digital inclusion by providing affordable, easily accessible, high-performance, broadband service to Banning residents and businesses. The City applied for a LATA grant in September 2022 and was awarded funds in November 2022.

On December 12, 2023, City Council approved Resolution 2023-191 authorizing the City to enter into a contract with CTC Technology and Energy to assist with the CPUC LATA Broadband Feasibility Study for the grant. As part of this study, staff has identified 5 groups of stakeholders within the community, which include Schools & Libraries, Businesses, Tribes & CBOs, ISPs and Government. This committee will participate in the Government meeting along with other local government agencies and offices.

JUSTIFICATION:

The City is committed to establishing a solid foundation to assess how to provide this essential broadband service to unserved and underserved residents and businesses. The LATA grant and broadband feasibility study will enable the City to address broadband capacity and connectivity concerns critical to the City’s growth and future economic resiliency and make informed decisions related to workforce retention and economic growth and help retain and attract businesses to Banning’s growing

population and economy.

In addition, expanding the broadband network will improve operations and the quality of services rendered by City facilities with telecommunication and Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA) communication systems specifically for water, wastewater, and electric utilities.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no fiscal impact associated with this recommendation for City Council action.

ALTERNATIVES:

1. Appoint (2) Ad-Hoc Committee Members
2. Do not appoint committee members and provide alternative direction to meet grant needs.