

# Rappahannock News

rappnews.com

144th Year • No. 49

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 16, 2021

\$1

## BIG LEAP FOR BROADBAND

### State awards county critical funding for universal service

#### BY THE NUMBERS

**\$5.9 MILLION**

Total cost of the project to Rappahannock County

**\$3.5 MILLION**

Resident Chuck Akre's donation

**\$715,768**

Federal funds allocated by county to broadband

**\$1.7 MILLION**

Remaining cost the county is on the line for

**\$199**

What residents can expect to pay for a fiber installation during All Points' first 12 months of service

## Town's longtime attorney unexpectedly resigns

**BY BEN PETERS**

*Rappahannock News sta*

Longtime Washington Town Attorney John Bennett suddenly resigned Monday afternoon after more than 25 years of service, saying in an interview Thursday afternoon that he felt it was an appropriate time to exit.

Bennett, who also served as Washington's zoning administrator, was



FILE PHOTO BY LUKE CHRISTOPHER

Public, private characterizations of the terms surrounding John Bennett's departure differ.

Bennett was not present at Washington Town Council's Monday night meeting where he usually presides. "I've been reading on the internet actually in

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## Board of Supervisors must decide whether to enter into a contract

**BY JULIA SHANAHAN**

*Rappahannock News Sta*

Rappahannock County on Monday was awarded funding from the Virginia Telecommunications Initiative (VATI) to build a universal fiber-to-home broadband network in the county.

For the project to become reality, the Rappahannock County Board of Supervisors must decide whether to enter into a formal contract with private internet provider All Points Broadband and commit \$5.9 million in county funds toward internet expansion. If the Board of Supervisors votes to leave the regional partnership with Northern Shenandoah Valley Regional Commission (NSVRC), seven other counties and All Points, then the county will not receive any VATI funds to expand broadband.

The NSVRC and All Points received \$95.3 million from VATI — just below the requested \$97.2 million — to build a fiber-to-home network across eight counties in the region. It is not immediately clear precisely how much of that funding Rappahannock County received. NSVRC and All Points received the largest award out of all the VATI applications.

The project will provide a fiber network to 37,357 unserved locations and work to achieve universal coverage in Augusta, Clarke, Fauquier, Frederick, Page, Rappahannock, Rockingham and Warren Counties, according to a press release from the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development.

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## Proposed new map places county in new Congressional district

The 10th District is currently represented by Rep. Jennifer Wexton, a Democrat from Loudoun County. 6



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# Merry Christmas!

BY RAY BOC

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## Next broadband hurdle: Finding \$1.4 million

If county approves participation in regional project, it must get more funds to avoid using taxpayer dollars

**B J S**  
Rappahannock News sta

As the Rappahannock County Board of Supervisors await taking a vote that will determine if the county finalizes a universal broadband project, members are trying to procure funding to avoid using tax dollars to pay for it.

The supervisors still lack the funding needed to cover the outstanding cost of the project. The Board of Supervisors is hedging its bets on obtaining funds from outside sources such as local nonprofits, additional federal stimulus dollars and other local grants to avoid reaching into its general fund — but where the money might come from remains uncertain.

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### OUR ANNUAL HOLIDAY BREAK

The Rappahannock News will not publish an edition next week (Dec. 30). We'll return in print on Jan. 6, 2022. In the meantime, follow breaking news at rappnews.com. Happy holidays — and thank you for reading and advertising!

**B B P**  
Rappahannock News sta

In Rappahannock County this year, one citizen dominated the conversation.

Chuck Akre, a nationally recognized asset manager by career, first made waves with his ongoing efforts in the Town of Washington to build Rush River Commons, which is expected to become Rappahannock's first mixed-use development featuring more affordable housing and space for community organizations. More recently, he s

pledged a \$3.5 million donation to help bring universal broadband to the county.

Both of those sweeping initiatives aren't without controversy. But his mid-year conservation purchase of what's one of Rappahannock's most treasured pastoral landscapes, the 7,100-acre Eldon Farms that for years many feared would fall into the hands of real estate developers, can hardly be questioned.

FILE PHOTO BY LUKE CHRISTOPHER

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### Clevenger's Corner scheduled to begin construction in spring

More than 700 homes closer to becoming reality near county line. 6



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