

Memo

To: Mayor and Town Council

From: Lyle L Layton

Date: July 5, 2016

Re: Senate Bill 05-152

Colorado Senate Bill 05-152 states that: "Before a local government may engage or offer to engage in providing cable television service, telecommunications service, or advanced service, an election shall be called on whether or not the local government shall provide the proposed cable television service, telecommunication service or advanced service."

Many local governments across Colorado have already put this question to their citizens, therefore opting out of the restriction of providing such services. More reliable and faster internet service is becoming a driver to economic development which is at least partly behind this movement. Internet use is doubling each year for a number of reasons, one being that watching one video is comparable to viewing 30,000 web pages. Therefore faster speeds are required for efficiency and many communities do not have the necessary infrastructure to keep up with the residential and business demand. Garfield and Mesa Counties are teaming up to study broadband needs of the area and if the local government entities should become involved in providing service. Rio Blanco County, to the north, conducted a study, opted out of the restriction and is near completion on installing the infrastructure to provide internet to almost all of the county. At a recent GARCO Economic Development Partners meeting the broadband study consultant noted that Longmont is a financial success story of a local government which opted out of the state law and is providing the service to citizens.

It appears that Garfield County would like for all the local governments to hold an election to opt out of the state restriction. This would facilitate a quicker response if they decide to proceed with a county wide system. The state has earmarked funds to be granted by DOLA to assist with these projects. I believe that these types of projects could also move the private sector to act sooner in providing better service. I am not sure what the cost would be to add this to the existing election, but would anticipate it would be very minimal.

