

Good evening, board members.

My name is Jeff Elkner, and I am a resident of the Arlington Mill community. I am also a teacher at the Arlington Career Center.

I'm here tonight to add my voice of support to any effort that can result in broader community and public access to Internet services. As an IT teacher, I understand full well that access to the Internet at the beginning of the 3rd decade of the 21st century is not a luxury. It is a necessity, simple as that.

I now meet my students each day online, and anyone with inadequate Internet access is at a severe disadvantage. That was true before the pandemic. It is much more so now.

So I appeal to you, board members, to act in the interest of our community, broadly defined. We are living in a time of crisis. The last time we were in a crisis like this it took a decade of labor militancy and a world war to get us out of it. This time I don't know what it will take.

But I do know that "the market" and "the private sector" is not going to provide us with the solutions we need. I graduated from high school in 1979, which is roughly the last time that the working class in our country received a raise in real wages.

Inequality has been increasing ever since, as Thomas Piketty documented so well in *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*. Things have been getting more unequal for decades, and now they are about to get much worse.

The market does a terrible job of taking care of the needs of those of us most at risk. Drive by the Career Center on food distribution days and that reality is abundantly clear. It is ourselves, in the form of our schools, our community organizations, and our local governments to whom we need to turn in times like these.

The county board already made a huge mistake in my view pandering to the interests of one of the largest tech oligarchs in our nation, and many folks in my community are already suffering as a result.

I humbly ask you on behalf of myself, my students, and my neighbors, to begin to rethink your approach to meeting our community need for Internet service and to begin to act in a way that builds wealth and equity rooted in our local community instead of funneling it up to those who already have far far more than they could ever use.

For my part, I promise to do what I can, both at the ballot box and beyond it, toward creating the political climate that will make it easier for you to do the right thing by supporting the creation of a Broadband Authority in Arlington.

Thank you for listening.
Jeff Elkner