

Broadband Study Committee (BSC) Meeting Notes

Date: September 22nd, 2022

The meeting was held virtually, on Zoom.

Committee Members Present: Sean Powers, Bob Espindola, Tom McAfee, Alyssa Botelho

Committee Members Absent: Sean Daly, Cathy Melanson

Town Staff Present: Derek Frates.

Consultants Present

Entry Point -Jeff Christensen, Devin Cox

The meeting was called to order at 7:30 PM.

The meeting minutes from the August 23rd meeting were reviewed.

Tom McAfee motioned to approve, Sean Powers seconded. Roll call vote was taken, all members present were in favor.

Jeff Christensen asked if there was a green light to move forward based on the new mission statement for the BSC. Bob Espindola answered yes, the Select Board did approve as presented.

Jeff suggested prioritizing the list of tasks outlined in the Mission Statement.

Jeff asked if the Town had received documentation about the \$50M now available from the Mass Broadband Institute (MBI) for Digital Equity.

Digital Navigator could provide staffing assistance for a period of time.

Jeff believes Public Housing wifi is going to be eligible and there may be an opportunity to expand beyond the \$250K grant for the Housing Authority.

Jeff suggested that Entry Point could be a resource to help with the grant application under an arrangement where they would only charge if we were successful in receiving the grant.

Grant Preparation to high level management role could be the scope of services. Jeff suggested the BSC or a representative look into procurement requirements.

Bob Espindola noted that the Town Administrator is the Chief Procurement Officer and she can provide guidance.

Bob explained that, on the technical assistance side, SRPEDD may be able to help with the CCC grant administration but that is conceptual only at this time.

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Bob suggested that the proposals suggested he would take any proposals from Entry Point to the

- 1) Write Grant application to MBI
- 2) Grant writing and high level advising for the grant.

Bob asked for the pricing to include not only an hourly rate but also a not to exceed amount.

Bob and Jeff will be meeting with FHA representatives next Tuesday and Bob will try to learn more about any FHA concerns for project schedule.

Sean Powers asked if we are looking to build out for potential for Open Access model. Jeff said that the fiber could be sized for the future but the model would not be set up for Open Access at the outset, it would be more based on a Wi-Fi model now but the buildout would allow for a transition to an Open Access model. This would require changes within the building only not on the main network.

The time frame is about one year to build out for the CCC grant, September 30th.

The MBI grants we discussed earlier will have about a 2 year window.

Jeff Christensen explained that Entry Point is working on a model that would allow a partnership with a Bank that would eliminate "friction points" with take rates and financing. Under this model, the network would be built with private funds and the Town would sign on to use lease the system with an option to buy out once the system is fully established.

He explained that they are hopeful that this model could be available within about 6 months.

He said that economies of scale may be required to satisfy financing partner criteria. He said they may be looking for projects valued at \$50M plus at a minimum, and, therefore, it may only work in a regional model.

Bob provided an update on next steps with Article 34 and 35 from Town Meeting (ongoing).

Devin Cox provided an update on some market concerns for Broadband equipment and materials that could drive cost on a possible build out.

Bob Espindola mentioned that the FHA is a State funded program and that even though Town people are on the board, they apply for CPC funds, etc, it is not a Town. He mentioned that when things cross over from Town to State, like a wi-fi system there may need to be a Memorandum of understanding on our maintenance of the system will work

Derek Frates provided an update on the website, including announcement of the CCC grant, he said the Mission Statement will need to be posted.

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The committee set the next meeting date for October 20th at 7:00 P.M.

Motion to adjourn was made at 7:56 P.M. by Tom McAfee, seconded by Sean Powers. There was no further discussion. The roll call vote was unanimous in favor.

Minutes Submitted by Bob Espindola