

BROADBAND STUDY COMMITTEE

Date: August 26, 2020

Time: 7:30 p.m. EST

ATTENDANCE:

- Bob Espindola
- Derek Frates
- Sean Powers
- Alyssa Botelho
- Cathy Melanson
- Stephanie Garde
- Devin Cox, EntryPoint Networks
- Jeff Christensen, EntryPoint Networks

Meeting was called to order at 7:30 pm by Mr. Espindola who welcomed the new committee members then turned the meeting over to Sean Powers who advised every one of the recording regulations and thanked everyone for attending.

REVIEW MEETING MINUTES:

Mr. Powers asked the committee if they had a chance to review meeting minutes from the June 30, 2020 meeting. Mr. Espindola said he saw a few minor typos and would want to review them before voting. Mr. Espindola asked they table it to the end of the meeting so he can have time to locate them and review with the group.

Mr. Powers agreed and moved the meeting over to Jeff Christensen to begin review of the Master Plan report and next steps.

AGENDA:

Mr. Christensen asked if they were going to be added to the agenda for the September 8, 2020 Selectman meeting. Mr. Espindola said he still needs to request it so it is not official yet. Mr. Christensen let the committee know Mr. Cox sent them all over the draft however there are still a few elements missing and the attorney will provide a memo on what that Town can do.

He said they have engaged a company about connecting networks and told them he will need a report by 9/5/2020. Mr. Christensen stated he would take feedback if any is given after the committee has reviewed the draft. He explained a companion document to this is a "Next Steps" document where there is space for committee recommendations. He said he needs feedback from Mr. Espindola on whether this comes from the committee or Selectman. Mr. Espindola said this is an advisory committee and not sure which questions are for the Selectman but feels the committee should be the ones advising the Selectman.

Mr. Christensen began reviewing the Broadband Master Plan table of contents and the scope of contract EntryPoint signed up for.

The strategy used was they took feedback from the SWOT analysis and incorporated it into this plan. He stated if anyone feels something is missing they can provide feedback before it is submitted to the Selectman.

The infrastructure details the 3 main media used today: DSL, Coaxial Cable, and Fiber Optic. Mr. Christensen said they want to arm the committee with enough information to make a recommendation to the Selectboard. He went on to review the Upload/Download speed advising that download is used mostly when browsing and upload is used when recording voice and to see other screens. Comcast does have limitations as it can deliver decent download but struggle with upload.

Mr. Christensen passed the review off to Mr. Cox to review the Market Analysis. Mr. Cox said it is pretty straightforward. The carriers were Xfinity Comcast and Verizon and they randomly selected different neighborhoods in 8 locations. What they found was Comcast offers were more consistent and Verizon had huge gaps. With Comcast speed and pricing were very common and they usually see a higher profit after a 2 year contract. With Verizon they have a low DSL speed in the residential areas. Mr. Cox asked if the Town wants to see the commercial offerings. Mr. Espindola asked if there was any way to represent the businesses. Mr. Cox said he would review findings but they are not listed in the plan. He said Comcast generally charges businesses less speed for more money because "businesses can afford it" with no difference in the infrastructure and response time. Verizon business is all DSL based. Mr. Espindola said it would be worthwhile to put the business information in the plan.

Mr. Cox reviewed the Community Engagement Plan and said the Town should be aggressive in its effort to enroll the community and provide feedback. The survey results showed they received 39 responses and the level of support was "very strong support for a network" 0 were opposed. Mr. Cox said we need to get the number of responses up to get a better representation. He said with the current responses it indicated choice of plan and rate importance was at 92% it indicated a very high dissatisfaction rate for the current ISP.

Mr. Christensen stated the biggest weakness is the sample size. Mr. Espindola stated that in order for the committee to be comfortable bringing this to the Selectman the community engagement needs to be more robust. Mr. Christensen stated most of the 39 responses came from the Social media push. He suggested maybe Derek Frates and Alyssa Botelho push another round. Ms. Botelho said she will post on the Social media sites again and Mr. Frates said he has a link on the Fairhaven TV site to connect to the survey on the Town site. Mr. Espindola said as a committee they need to be more proactive and go out the community and gave an example of standing outside the Post Office and asking people if they would be interested in doing the survey. He also stated information can be put in the racks at the Town Hall and Rec Center. Mr. Cox asked if the Town had a local newspaper and suggested putting in a press release. Mr. Espindola said that Neighborhood News and SouthCoast Today are the local newspapers

to put in a press release. Mr. Frates and Ms. Botelho will check them out and Mr. Cox will try to find the press release used in other areas.

Mr. Christensen advised the committee they would want a couple hundred responses to be statistically valid when presenting it to the Selectman.

Mr. Christensen told the committee an important part of their homework is to get together and decide which models they recommend for the Town to continue to explore moving forward. He reviewed the pros and cons of the models and told the committee it is important they are comfortable with the models in order to make a recommendation on which ones to continue to investigate.

Mr. Christensen discussed funding consideration stating does the Town tax non participant members which will force people to pay taxes to build the infrastructure which would be the lowest cost but may have push back or would it be by voluntary participation. He told the committee they will need to decide. The Town will need to build a marketing campaign around improvement of property value of the home increasing. Mr. Christensen says a Co-Op is also an option to put out to the community which would mean whomever signs up becomes co-owners of the network. Mr. Espindola said the Co-Op model may be a way for the Town not to have all the risk. Mr. Christensen said he will add in the Co-Op option.

Mr. Christensen went on to review pricing and advised the committee that take rate matters when it comes to pricing and the more people who sign up the lower the cost will be.

The next steps the committee should be looking at is a recommendation.

- Look into models
- Should the Town discontinue the process
- Make a recommendation on Town operated or outsourced
- Recommend construction and infrastructure media type
- Fiber Optics symmetrical or A symmetrical
- Review 2 middle mile carrier proposals
- Buried network, Arial network, or Hybrid

Additional projects:

- Prepare RFP
- Identify a financial advisor familiar with bonds
- Identify legal counsel familiar with Mass law to advise on financing and legal considerations
- Take current community engagement recommendations and refine them

Mr. Espindola said at this time he feels they will not be ready to meet with the Selectman by 9/8/2020 and thinks the committee may need to meet again and will reach out to Mr. Christensen with any additional questions. He said the Selectman meeting scheduled for 9/21/2020 would be better and also advised everyone there will be a Town Meeting scheduled in May.

Mr. Espindola said he identified the typos in the June 30, 2020 meeting minutes and got clarification from Mr. Cox. Mr. Espindola made a motion to approve the meeting minutes with the changes, Mr. Powers seconded the motion. Roll call vote, all in favor to approve the minutes.

Mr. Frates asked about the date of the next committee meeting and Mr. Espindola said he would like to get the committee together in a few weeks.

Next meeting will be scheduled for Wednesday September 16, 2020 at 7:30p.m.

Mr. Powers made motion to adjourn meeting and was seconded by Ms. Melanson.
Motion passed unanimously and meeting was adjourned at 9:35p.m.

Respectively submitted,

Mary Lou Krosschell
Recording Secretary