

BROADBAND STUDY COMMITTEE

Date: September 16, 2020

Time: 7:30 p.m. EST

ATTENDANCE:

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

Meeting was called to order at 7:30 pm by Mr. Powers who welcomed who advised every one of the recording regulations and thanked everyone for attending.

REVIEW MEETING MINUTES of August 2020:

Mr. Powers asked the committee if they had a chance to review meeting minutes from August 2020 meeting. Mr. Espindola motioned to accept the minutes and Mr. Powers seconded the motion. Roll call vote, all in favor vote was unanimous.

AGENDA:

Mr. Christensen asked the committee if there was a timeframe for the meeting. Mr. Espindola advised they need to walk away from this meeting with a clear message for the Selectman meeting and need to discuss the community communication and what that message will be.

Mr. Cox provided an update on Survey engagement, last meeting they had 39 now they have 84. Mr. Cox said this is an improvement from a percentage perspective and only 1 business has responded so far. All trends and statistical data are showing favorable support of it.

Mr. Christensen reviewed the survey questions to see if they will be the same as the paper survey or if more will be added. Mr. Espindola said question #8 needs to provide more detail to narrow down what we are looking to offer and what it will mean for the Town as far as risk. Mr. Cox asked if the mailer or the website is the best place to add the additional information and was advised by Mr. Espindola the mailer should have the survey and a 1 page supplement explaining the details. All of the supporting documentation should be on the website. Mr. Espindola explained if they think any decisions need to

be made in Town meeting in May the water bill mailer is the best opportunity to gauge interest and decide if the Town will go out and get an RFP. Mr. Powers questioned if it will be a paper survey or website survey and was advised by Mr. Cox that other cities and towns have done both. However the paper survey did get more response than the web and if the goal is to get the most responses offer both. Mr. Espindola stated the need for the committee to look into the cost of printing, postage, and the clerical staff to go through the surveys when they come in. Mr. Christensen said they still have money in the travel budget that can be used if needed for this. Mr. Espindola advised the committee that the survey alone will not be what makes the decision for the Town to move forward it is just to see if there is interest.

Mr. Christensen asked the committee if there were any objections to the objectives at this point and Mr. Espindola stated the focus should be on the mailer not bringing it in front of the Selectman, not ready for that at this time maybe after the Fall Town Meeting. The focus is on the document of explanation and what information will go out in the mail. The committee agreed.

Mr. Christensen said the next recommendation is for what media will be used in the network. EntryPoint recommends Fiber Optic and asked if a decision could be made and a vote taken.

Wayne Hayward asked if he would be allowed to ask a few questions. Mr. Powers said that questions were allowed from the public and are forwarded to the Selectman. Mr. Hayward said he has been following the committee from the beginning and most seniors are concerned with the cost of TV not internet speed. He stated he has been waiting for this committee to address real questions and that the tax payers cannot handle having to pay for more. He went on to question if 2 full time members of the committee's salaries would double from doing this as it poses a serious ethics issue and what legal framework is the committee proceeding under?

Mr. Powers asked if any of his concerns have ever been put into writing and was told by Mr. Hayward he intends to put them in the newspapers. He stated a municipality can't run a utility as well as an enterprise. Both Mr. Powers and Ms. Garde said that other cities have.

Mr. Espindola advised Mr. Hayward that no decisions have been made on who would run any departments and asked Mr. Frates and Ms. Botelho to approach the State ethics committee on their roles. He stated that on a legal front the committee has had discussions with lawyers who specialize in this and discuss the legal framework. Mr. Christensen stated that the committee looked for people to join and no one did, that is when the two employees did. Mr. Frates let him know that he was assigned to the committee and when he was he advised Mr. Espindola that Comcast funds his department and was told by the lawyer that it was ok to be involved.

Mr. Christensen said the committee is working on how to bring all of the information to the public and suggested Mr. Hayward draft a letter with his questions to the committee chairman, Mr. Sean Powers. He said it would be added to the next meeting agenda and then they can address all of his concerns regarding the burden to the tax payers. Mr. Hayward said his concern is what legal opinion has the committee obtained that says you can do what you mean to do. Mr. Hayward was advised legal documents have just been obtained but are not yet on record, but the committee is ok to move forward. Mr. Hayward asked to be steered to a community in the Commonwealth where this has been done because he disagrees that 15,000 people should be a test community to see if this is doable. Mr. Espindola stated he was asked by the people if there are any other options that can be done because "Comcast" bills are too high no one ever just said the TV bill was too high. Tonight's discussion is what will be going out in the water bills to the people.

Mr. Christensen reviewed the “Next Steps” document that was provided to the committee.

A motion was made by Mr. Powers to vote on the media type to be Fiber and was seconded by Mr. Espindola. Mr. Frates asked about a wireless option and was advised by Mr. Espindola that wireless will be the backbone infrastructure. A roll call vote was taken, all in favor of Fiber Optic. Vote was unanimous.

Mr. Christensen went on to discuss the difference between symmetrical and asymmetrical architecture and recommended symmetrical. Mr. Powers made a motion for symmetrical, a roll call vote was taken. All in favor, vote was unanimous.

The committee reviewed the “Next Steps” and discussed the following items:

- Single ISP or Open Access – Decision to be made without Mr. Cox and Mr. Christensen present so they would not influence the committees decision
- Does the Town want to own its own electrical utility – NO
- On a scale of 1-10 how important is it to have more than one additional ISP? - Decision to be made without Mr. Cox and Mr. Christensen present so they would not influence the committees decision
- Recommendation on whether to follow an opt-in model or a universal build (voluntary or everyone gets connected) - A roll call vote was taken to recommend the Opt – in model to the Selectman.
- Will the Town be required to backstop the debt? – At this time the Town is working with a municipal attorney and the Town does have the authority to move ahead.
- Will the infrastructure go to every premise? – The committee voted against a Betterment. Mr. Espindola said this should be put in the supplement going in the mailer
- Make a recommendation on which legal structure to use under state law/would the Town need to backstop the debt? - Mr. Espindola expressed concern that the committee does not have the complete information on this. Mr. Powers agreed and said it will be added to the next agenda.
- Can the Town’s current network be leveraged as a backbone for potential fiber to the premise network? – Mr. Espindola said they will check with the IT dept to work on this to try and get a figure on how much of the poles we are using
- Recommendation on 100% buried, 100% aerial, or hybrid – They will get a sub-group together to discuss further
- Risk to Town, recommend whether the Town should follow design/build or separate the engineering and construction functions, doing separate RFP’s – Mr. Christensen said there could be 3 possible RFP’s; Engineering design, Construction design or could do a design build. The RFP will say these are the actual costs to potential subscribers the risk to the Town if it doesn’t get support to move forward and if it does the cost of the RFP would roll into the cost of the project.

All other items would be discussed further if the Town chooses to move forward.

Mr. Christensen summarized the decision is the go with a Fiber Optic symmetrical network same upload/download speed. The preliminary report has several financial reports showing they would need approximately 2500 subscribers to sustain its own network so the Town does not have to support it. Mr. Espindola asked Mr. Christensen to write up a 1 page summary to add to the survey.

Mr. Frates will send out a press release from the committee on line, in the Neighborhood News, and update the homepage of Fairhaven Connect adding in the information from this meeting.

Mr. Frates moved Mr. Christensen and Mr. Cox into a waiting room so the committee could discuss the other open issues.

All committee members agreed the Open Access model does open up more competition, the prices would be lower, and it keeps more options open.

The committee rated the importance of having more than 1 ISP as a 9 on a scale of 1-10.

Is the town open to becoming the owner of the infrastructure if risk level is acceptable? Mr. Espindola said we could let the community know our committee would not advocate for ownership if there were an unacceptable amount of risk.

Mr. Frates brought Mr. Cox and Mr. Christensen back into the meeting. The committee provided Mr. Christensen with the answers to what they discussed and let him know the Town is going with an Open Access Model.

Town owned or Co-Op model made up people who voluntarily opt in and they own the network. Much easier to finance if the town owns the infrastructure. Rate would be 4% more expensive as a Co-Op. Mr. Christensen said this is something that doesn't need to be decided tonight. Mr. Espindola asked the cost to the consumer of the different models. Mr. Christensen provided some approximate figures and provided verbiage for what would be provided to the community.

Mr. Espindola said they would need to speak with Mr. Rees about if there would be funding for all of this aside from printing costs. Mr. Frates said there is money that was approved at town meeting. Mr. Espindola said he would like to meet with Mr. Rees, Mr. Frates, and Mr. Christensen to discuss this. Put the original survey plus supplement and ask people to take survey or Postcard if we have to fund a self-addressed stamped envelope. Everyone who has a water bill will get the number of mailers to go out and get cost to add self-addressed post card to that. All committee members agreed to this plan. Mr. Espindola will take the information from Jeff and Devin and create an informational letter.

Mr. Hayward was asked to address his letter with questions again to Mr. Powers. Mr. Espindola will have the Selectman review the work that has been done so far with attorneys and post the draft report to the website so the public can see what work has been done so far.

Mr. Powers made motion to adjourn meeting and was seconded by Mr. Espindola. Motion passed unanimously and meeting was adjourned.

Respectively submitted,

Mary Lou Krosschell
Recording Secretary

