
Minutes
June 24, 2021 7:00p.m.
Town of Fairhaven Broadband Study Committee

Fairhaven Staff Appointee:

- Derek Frates

Committee Members:

- 1 . Bob Espindola, Select Board representative
- 2 . Sean Powers, Chairman
- 3 . Alyssa Botelho - absent.
- 4 . Cathy Melanson
- 5 . Nicole Antonio
- 6 . Devin Cox, EntryPoint
- 7 . Jeff Christensen, EntryPoint

Agenda Items:

- Review/ Approve Minutes from prior meeting (Sean): Mr. Powers stated they would postpone approving the minutes until the next meeting, as they were just received today.

Mr. Christensen had Nicole Antonio, new member introduce herself. She stated she worked for AT&T and has lived in Fairhaven for the last 22 years. She was eager to be on the Broadband Study Committee. She is working from home and pays Comcast nearly \$111.00/month and is excited about the internet options for Fairhaven with the Broadband Study Committee.

- Any Feedback from Town Meeting & Article #34 (Bob & Jeff)
Mr. Christensen asked if there was any feedback from Town Meeting. Mr. Powers stated he received some feedback and there are a few broadband champions out there.

Mr. Espindola stated it was encouraging to see the support from the TM (Mr. Frates stated it was 143 to 20 in favor). He was pleased with the overwhelmingly support of the article.

Mr. Christensen asked if there was a way to find out who didn't vote, the twenty people and if there was a way to better support those people with more information. Mr. Espindola stated how it works at Town Meeting.

Mr. Christensen stated he would just like to be able to give more information to people if that was available. Discussion ensued on if there was anyone who was strongly against the article. Mr. Espindola stated there was one person who was concerned with the cost and then someone who was against because of the cost of the poles to get on and Mr. Espindola answered the best he could.

Mr. Christensen said it sounds like 86% support, which is a good thing.

- Timing for Next Town Meeting Vote? (Fall or 2022?)

Mr. Espindola stated there was general acknowledgement that there would be a Town Meeting. He stated there was nothing that says there wouldn't be a fall town meeting, however there are other pressing things they may need a fall Town Meeting. He said there is something that says it has to be out at least two months from the last Town Meeting, therefore there might be one in September/October.

Mr. Powers asked Mr. Christensen how it was working with the Interim Town Administrator to get a RFP in process. Mr. Christensen stated that he and Mr. Bruce Patterson are still working on it with Ms. Graves as he needs to get certain things from her. He said the stuff he needs from Ms. Graves is more logistical.

Mr. Powers was more concerned if an earlier Town Meeting happened, if they would be ready for the RFP process.

Mr. Christensen said his goal would be to get the information completed within the next two weeks. He said he thinks they could submit their broadband plan right now. Mr. Christensen said he can reach out to Ms. Graves sometime in the next week and stated there are some RFP things she might have to read up on to get a clearer picture. He asked if Mr. Rees is available if Ms. Graves needed to contact him. Mr. Espindola stated he didn't think it would be. He said that he wasn't sure if he would be available for a phone call.

Mr. Christensen stated that he thinks Mr. Patterson would put them in a good place with the RFP process. He said they would go to Attorney Crotty with a few questions as well. He said it would be pretty straightforward on Ms. Graves' side. Mr. Christensen said it was his goal to get it done within the next two weeks and submit it. He thinks they are in good shape with what they have.

Mr. Espindola stated they could only go with what they have in front of them. He said there is a network of Town Administrators that Ms. Graves could speak to or get some assistance/guidance from.

Mr. Christensen gave a brief timetable of the RFP process. If they go out next month, they could get say to bring it back in four weeks, possibly early September. Mr. Espindola stated they could approach some of the companies to find out how long they would need to respond to such a RFP. He said they need to make sure they allow appropriate amount of time. Mr. Christensen said they could submit by July 15th and say thirty days to respond, get it back August 15th and then move forward. He said they would want to know is to get a price ready for the next Town Meeting. He said they would need to see what the trigger would be for Town Meeting to approve.

Mr. Espindola stated that he felt that they would need to get specifics of what the total cost was going to be for the next Town Meeting, and how the system would likely (the model the Town would be following in terms of the operations). He said that he was not anticipating what level of people would subscribe to it. He said that he felt that threshold would be after the second Town Meeting.

Mr. Christensen said they need to move with the Municipal Light Plan in place first and then engage in the public with more details.

Mr. Frates asked Ms. Antonio to review the broadband website as well as email him directly with any questions.

Mr. Christensen discussed the data that may be back by September 15th, and then in an October Town Meeting whether or not other drivers would be present to move forward.

Mr. Espindola stated the importance of Town Meeting articles that would have to be present to have an actual Town Meeting. He stated, it was his opinion that if it was the only article he didn't think there would be enough support for a TM. He didn't think the Town would call for a TM for one article; he said he did think there would be other issues that would constitute a Town Meeting in the fall.

Action: Mr. Christensen will engage Ms. Graves in the upcoming week to make sure she is fully aware of the pieces that are hers so there is parallel paths. He and Bruce Patterson will make sure they get there information together.

Mr. Christensen reviewed the Municipal Light Plan in Massachusetts.

- Yard Signs – Have people put away temporarily? (Devin & Derek)
Mr. Christensen asked if people knows to put them away temporarily and if any outreach should be done to put them away. Mr. Powers sent an email for people to pull and just hold on to them.

Mr. Powers said he has a spreadsheet to who owns them and some people have reached out for one.

Mr. Christensen said a fall town meeting in October would be best to get back some data.

- Create email to identify Fiber Champions to display and deliver Yard Signs (Derek & Sean)
Mr. Christensen one of the things they want to do is to get information out to the Fiber Champions and communicate regularly with them. Mr. Powers says he has the list.

Action: Mr. Christensen will put together a draft email to be sent out to the Fiber Champions. He will also do a draft email for the whole list, celebrate the vote that happened at TM and tell them the next steps. Encouraging anyone to reach out to Sean if they are interested in becoming Fiber Champions.

Mr. Espindola stated that he didn't want people to think they are reaching out to much, but they don't have that many meetings and they should get out as much information to them as possible. He said the Fiber Champions wouldn't have a problem at all receiving the information.

- Presentation from Marketing Firms
Mr. Christensen stated they have discussed with two Marketing Firms who will present to the team; however he didn't think they should listen to the pitch until the next MLP vote. Everyone seemed to be in agreeance. Mr. Christensen will reach out to the marketing firms and engage in their service after the next vote.

- Detailed Next Steps Plan

Mr. Christensen reviewed the next steps detailed plan and will get that information out to Mr. Frates. He said the next focus is getting this over to the Attorney General. He said they have to understand the MLP piece of things and then really consider whether the Town prefers a new department in Town or a third party doing the MLP. He said they need to look at the financing part of things as well.

Mr. Espindola agreed these are some of the grey areas that need to be more specific. He said reviewing the different models and offering pro's and con's with each. He suggested if the Town did it they would really need to identify the pro's/con's if they took it upon themselves to do it. Mr. Espindola stated they needed to look at the legal obligations as well.

Discussion around whether this information should be at the next Town Meeting and/or just the Municipal Light Plan. Mr. Christensen stated that if people didn't understand it they might not want to vote for it.

Mr. Espindola agreed more information needs to be available for Town Meeting members. He said they have to be clear what the second vote may look like for information to residents.

Mr. Christensen said that detail #5, which is exploring legal pathways available is really a meeting with Bond counsel.

Ms. Antonio asked if another town has done this and if there is something we can piggyback on that town's information.

Mr. Christensen spoke of the Town of Wilberham, and he will reach out to a member of that town.

Mr. Espindola stated there are other communities who are going through the steps as we are going right now. The Town of Milton is going through the same steps. Mr. Espindola suggested a working group with another town.

Action: Mr. Christensen to discuss with the Town of Milton on their next steps and perhaps how each other could help with Fairhaven.

Mr. Christensen said they really want to anticipate the questions that Town Meeting is going to have and get the answers out effectively to them. And Mr. Espindola agreed that that's what they promised them at this last Town Meeting. Specifically cost and how this will impact them directly.

Mr. Christensen will speak to Wilberham and Milton.

Mr. Christensen reviewed #7 on the plan, Select Open Access Partner. He said he doesn't think this has to occur before the next Town Meeting vote. But he does think the Broadband Committee needs to review separately as it would be a conflict of interest if discussed with Entry Point.

Homework Assignments:

For everyone to start thinking and updating ideas for updates to the IG. And drill down the answers for potential questions at the next Town Meeting.

Mr. Espindola asked about the timing of the outreach as well. He spoke about the Marketing efforts and outreach they need to be addressed to residents. "Is there anything else you need to know?" (for residents to respond to). Mr. Espindola stated that they should think about external grant options. Mr. Cox reviewed what others are doing with the ARPO(?) funds that are available.

○ Next Meeting Date?

The Committee discussed the first week in August. Thursday, August 5th at 7pm was set.

Here is the proposed warrant article wording for a municipal light plant / telecommunications facility-

"To see if the town will vote pursuant to M.G.L. C. 164 sec. 36 to acquire a municipal light plant and to authorize such plant to construct, purchase or lease, and maintain such facilities as may be necessary for the distribution or the operation of a telecommunications system for municipal use or for the use of its customers, pursuant to M.G.L. C.164 sec.47E, or as otherwise authorized by law, or to take any other action thereon."

This article requires a two thirds vote, taken by ballot with the use of the voting list, at each of two town meetings called therefor and held at intervals of not less than two nor more than thirteen months.