

BROADBAND STUDY COMMITTEE
TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 17, 2019 – 7:00P.M.

Present: Chairman, Sean Powers, Bob Espindola, John Methia, Suzanne Dwyer (new member), and John Seed

Absent: Jay Simmons

Cable Director, Derek Frates was also in attendance.

Chairperson, Sean Powers advised that because the agenda was not posted in a timely manner with the Town Clerk, the meeting would be for informational purposes only and no votes would be taken.

Terry Barnes from Solarity was present to give a presentation.

Mr. Barnes was here to discuss a feasibility study here in Fairhaven. “every community” needs to see what model is best for it.

Mr. Espindola stated that the idea being adopted wouldn’t have to be 100% adopted, could be a smaller percentage if we see that it is accessible and affordable.

Mr. Barnes discussed what they’ve done in the past in Kentucky with communities as far as Broadband Success factors including strategic planning processes and inclusive community engagements and education. Solarity is a Project Management company. His role being the project manager.

Discussion on what do we know about the community and their view on the current broadband service. Ms. Dwyer stated it’s a monopoly in our area and we only have that one option, with no backup of good customer service.

Mr. Espindola stated that there is a survey out presently to see if there would be another company who would want to provide service to the Fairhaven area. He stated a large concern in the community that we only have one choice.

RFP should include the requirement that they need to test the speed of the network service that can be used.

Mr. Methia feels that we should definitely put it in the RFP that the provider/company who bids needs to do the test themselves, as it may be difficult with the homeowner.

Mr. Barnes stated there is an app that homeowners can use. He stated that the company would need to figure out a way to measure that sample.

Mr. Methia not sure if residents would go the extra mile to help us get that sample.

Mr. Powers stated that Comcast uses an url to get those speed tests now.

Mr. Barnes stated to ask the respondent to give you the way they are going to do those tests. He states an RFP opens the door for partnering.

Mr. Espindola mentioned that timing may be key to get information to the resident. Perhaps with next water bill, or at the Special Town Meeting. Also through #Fairhaven (the IT Social Media person that posts things on behalf of Fairhaven).

Mr. Methia just thinks things need to be an easy process for residents.

How do you build how important broadband is going to be now and in the future? Do you want in the RFP that you want the respondent to build the materials for the public.

Ms. Dwyer stated she didn't think we should pay for those additional materials.

Mr. Espindola said the Committee should take on the town hall meetings. His issue is the content should come from the RFP respondent.

This process is more basic. The value of broadband and what it's going to mean to you in the future. Mr. Barnes stated the respondent would have to put a package together to educate the public. Educating people first.

Mr. Barnes said one of the ways to write up the RFP is to include how we all want to. A specific topic, and then ala carte, stated Mr. Powers.

Mr. Barnes will write it up and then return it to the Committee to review and put out.

Mr. Barnes suggest to request respondents to develop a high level network design. Possible options: GPON (Gigabit Passive Optic Network) and AON (Active Ethernet), preferred design for software controlled open access network such as EntryPoint. Fixed wireless.

Discussion on how Broadband would work.

Capital cost would be middle (20%) and last mile fiber (80%).

Two variables, construction side – density; less it's to build on last mile. Take grade – different tiers in pricing. Discussion of different models.

Mr. Methia asked if a survey to our residents should come before the feasibility study.

Goal here for Solaris to put together a RFP for a feasibility study. Mr. Barnes said you're always in a position of the egg before the chicken. Mr. Espindola agreed because we still have to ask Town Meeting for money for the next step.

Ms. Dwyer asked if there were any available grants to produce some of these things. Mr. Barnes is from Kentucky, so he wouldn't know any in Massachusetts.

Mr. Espindola stated there are compact grants in Massachusetts that Fairhaven has received in the past, and is certainly something to explore.

Mr. Barnes continued with his presentation – control, risk, benefit. "Recommend a model for us", should be included in the RFP. Tell us what the control/financial risk analysis of models recommended

are. Mr. Espindola asked what does the Town benefit from to “control” to the Town. Mr. Barnes explained no control over the service from Xfinity currently; if the Town owns it the town controls that.

Mr. Barnes stated that Committee could start having informal conversations with providers to learn more.

Mr. Methia would like to see ‘emerging wireless’/‘emerging technology’ coming up, he would like to see that somewhere in the RFP. Where is wireless going to be in the next 2, 3, 5 years?

Street light poles may be owned by the Town, per Mr. Furtado of the DPW. Mr. Barnes will follow-up, he did have a discussion with Mr. Furtado today. He spoke about small 5g cell towers on top of the street light pole.

For RFP, minimum financial risk models wanted.

What money might be available to the Town, grants, low/interest loans. Mr. Barnes recommended that the respondents hit on this requirement.

Brief discussion on including respondents to analyze possible operations/maintenance models if the Town should want to provide the service.

Mr. Powers doesn’t see the Town taking on this.

Mr. Espindola thought if it’s going to turn a profit than perhaps or if we think we could provide a service to the community that their not going to complain about. Mr. Espindola thought we don’t need to decide an answer to this question in the beginning.

Mr. Methia doesn’t think the Town should provide this service. Mr. Espindola suggested maybe a pro/con of the system if provided by the Town just to learn more.

Mr. Barnes recommended the Pro forma analysis of broadband model(s) should be required.

Mr. Barnes recommended a Town Board (Selectmen or DPW, for example) govern the plan for municipal model. And if Town would provide the service a marketing plan for municipal model should be included. As well as respondents should recommend implementation plan if the model is for the municipal model.

Mr. Barnes went over the additional information that should be required for respondents. Overview of lead company and identification of partners/contractors that will be working on the project, experience performing broadband feasibility studies or similar types of broadband projects and resumes or profiles of key individuals that will be working on the project.

Mr. Barnes asked for a copy of Fairhaven’s template requirements, he will reach out to Mr. Rees, Town Administrator.

The Committee discussed possible RFP Respondents – Mr. Barnes noted Finley Engineering and TriWire Engineering Solutions. Ms. Dwyer advised that TriWire may be a conflict because they are connected with Comcast.

Mr. Espindola asked how the Committee could reach out to possible RFP respondents, finding out what type of industry. Mr. Barnes stated it would be engineering companies.

"Next Century Cities"/"Smart Cities" are networks advocates and support system. Mr. Barnes included a list at the end of the presentation.

The Committee reviewed the proposed feasibility study schedule.

Mr. Barnes was looking at his milestone to have the RFP ready for the Committee on October 3, 2019. RFP Question and Answer window from October 7-18th with the RFP response window being on November 1, 2019. Committee discussed what dates were best possible for deadlines.

Mr. Barnes suggested switching from RFP to Request for Qualifications; allow not cheat yourself a quicker response and give Committee more time for analysis. Once broken down, then you could ask for what the cost is.

Mr. Espindola suggested that Committee could review the applications/RFP's just to get an idea of what the cost is going to be from low to high and then feel comfortable this is the price range to put into Town Meeting Warrant for what the price would be to be then voted on.

Committee will have 1-2 people review the document on the 3rd of October in the morning and then the Committee will meet and discuss the document and give any feedback at that time. The Committee is looking to meet on Tuesday, October 8, 2019 to review the document.

Mr. Espindola stated he doesn't mind reviewing the document on October 3, 2019 and Sean Powers will also review. Mr. Espindola to confirm with Mr. Rees to also review the document that morning.

Mr. Barnes went over the contents of his folder presentation. A monthly Fiber Broadband Communities Magazine as being a great tool that is sent out monthly.

Mr. Espindola introduced new Committee meeting, Suzanne Dwyer.

Meeting adjourned at 9:25p.m.

Respectively submitted,

Patricia A. Pacella
Recording Secretary

Documents reviewed:

1. Solarity Presentation dated 09/17/19