

**Broadband Study Committee
February 25, 2020 - 7:00pm**

Present: Chairperson At Large, Sean Powers, Robert Espindola, John Methia, Jay S. Simmons, Derek Frates, Suzanne Dwyer, Erin Costa

Absent: John Seed

Confirm Quorum is present:

Meeting was called to order at 7:07pm by Chairperson, Sean Powers who advised every one of the recording regulations and thanked everyone for attending.

Review of Minutes:

Mr. Powers asked the committee if they had a chance to review meeting minutes from the November 26, 2019. Mr. Simmons made a motion to approve and the motion was seconded by Mr. Espindola. Motion was passed unanimously.

Kick off Meeting with Jeff Christensen from Entry Point:

Mr. Espindola welcomed everyone who was in attendance to the meeting and introduced special guest Jeff Christensen from Entry Point.

Mr. Espindola explained the community has made multiple inquires about Comcast being the only Cable service provider in the Town of Fairhaven and how they were not satisfied with their service and not having other options. Mr. Espindola said the Town has written up and submitted multiple requests for proposals and all of the competitors declined stating they were not interested in coming to do business in the Town due to the current infrastructure. Due to this the Town formed a committee to look at alternatives. Mr. Espindola went on to explain the committee went through the process of finding a consultant to assist with finding the alternatives who will be presenting tonight and introduced Jeff Christensen from Entry Point.

Mr. Christensen stated he was going to go through the scope of work and would be available to go over questions. He explained Entry Point is a software company and a consulting firm. His role is to be objective not biased, collect the information for analysis and present the committee with a report of the pros and cons of each option along with the financial implications.

Entry Point's scope of work is to describe the problem that needs a resolution, listen to the community and see if the Town is aligned with the problem. This is done by doing a risk assessment, analyzing the current market (Comcast/Verizon) and community engagement by meeting with people, going door to door, website, and surveys. Also picking an area of Town that represents both residential and

commercial customers and do cost modeling by having them provide copies of current Comcast billing. Bringing in Engineering firms, construction partners and other ISP providers to partner with. All of this gets built into a plan that will present options.

Mr. Christensen explained to the audience that right now Comcast owns the infrastructure and the ISP. He explained the differences between DSL, COAX Cable, and Fiber Optics stating the all options would be built into the plan to see which one is more feasible to the future needs of the Town and which is more cost effective in the long term. His opinion at this time is that Fiber Optics is the way to go since 5G is here now. He provided examples of phone companies jumping over to the Wireless market and how the TV/Phone/ Internet will soon all go over the Fiber Optic lines. Mr. Christensen reiterated that all options along with pros and cons will be in the report that is presented to the Committee and once they have all of the information needed they would then decide which one they would like to put in front of the Selectman.

Mr. Christensen listened to a few questions from members of the audience on how would the lines get to the homes, if we were discussing all services Internet/TV/Phone and replacing Comcast, and if the Town was looking into just being the infrastructure or being the ISP provider or both.

Mr. Espindola said he wanted everyone to try to understand all the options and that this is a feasibility study and will take months to get the information and no one knows right now what the end result will be. He let them know that after the meeting Mr. Frates and Ms. Costa would set up a link on the website where they could put their questions and concerns. Mr. Frates provided everyone with the website info and showed them where they could go to see the reports and info that is already available to anyone who wants to see it.

Mr. Methia said the Town is not discounting any options that the committee agreed to look at all options 5G, fiber optics everything is on the table.

Mr. Christensen said Entry Point will work on producing and objective report on all areas now until the end of July for the committee to review. Mr. Espindola went on to explain again they are an advisory committee formed by the Select board and will make a recommendation to the Selectman as to what next steps would be and this could be as early as next fall or could be a year from now.

Mr. Christensen presented the committee with some ideas to think about:

- Where is the economy trending
- Is the Infrastructure at the same levels as other Utilities? Is it essential? How do we get it to everyone and make it affordable?
- Where is your money going? (Cable companies/Wireless companies)
- Incumbents serve subscribers just enough to make a profit
- How do we give more control to customers?
- Why Fiber Optics (DSL 100mbps/Cable 1Gbps fast download slow upload/5G 2Gbps being heavily marketed right now/Fiber 25Tbps if you are going to put an infrastructure in

A member of the audience asked the committee why as a Town we have let Comcast have a monopoly while other towns in RI have Cox and other options.

Mr. Espindola stated the Town is not letting that happen. All we can do is ask and they are not interested in providing services here in Fairhaven. The reason why other companies do not want to come in is because of the cost of the infrastructure, RI may have a different dynamic there. Mr. Frates said Verizon, Cox, and RCN all declined to provide service. Mr. Methia went on to explain this is just a process to see if we as a Town want to take on the project and what path if any we would take on. Mr. Espindola commented that it is a very expensive project and the Town is not in the position right now to take on fully and the other option would be people in town would take on the cost. This is just a kick off meeting to get things started. Mr. Simmons went on to explain that Comcast owns the wire no one wants to come and in and buy the wires from Comcast and the poles from Verizon.

A member of the audience asked the committee why Comcast isn't coming into answer for their lack of service.

Mr. Espindola answered by stating that Comcast is a monopoly and we forward all concerns to them but as far a pricing there is nothing that can be done but service complaints may be addressed. This whole process is to see if we can get some competition. Mr. Christensen said the frustration is nationwide and Fairhaven is trying to address the situation.

Mr. Christensen reviewed a few more slides to the committee:

- Cost categories
- Open access
- Feasibility (can the Town of Fairhaven build an infrastructure and is it cost effective)
- Emerging trends

The town has interest of thinking of this as a Utility and fundamental change to a large system doesn't happen overnight. Mr. Espindola re-stated that part of this process is the engage the community, educate, and provide information as best they can and as they move forward they will have more information regarding cost.

Mr. Christensen said this year is a planning year and every option needs to make sense financially. They will start to work on market analysis and testing. Mr. Methia said before anything is put into place there would have to be buy in from the people and any in the end Comcast would still be an option for individuals who still wanted them.

Mr. Espindola said do make all of this happen we will need a lot of help and encouraged everyone to visit the website and reach out to the committee.

Mr. Powers thanked Mr. Christensen and everyone for coming.

Any issues not anticipated prior to posting the meeting agenda:

Mr. Powers asked if there were any other items or questions and there were none. Mr. Espindola said next steps with Mr. Christensen would be to build the scope of work into a time line with action items and have everyone review.

Confirm date for the next meeting:

Next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday March 24, 2020 at 7:00 pm

Mr. Simmons made motion to adjourn meeting and was seconded by Mr. Methia. Motion passed unanimously and meeting ended at 8:48p.m.

Respectively submitted,

Mary Lou Krosschell
Recording Secretary