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Minutes (Informational Meeting – No Quorum)  
December 9, 2021 6:30 p.m.  
Town of Fairhaven Broadband Study Committee

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Affiliations	Name	Present
Fairhaven Staff Appointee	Derek Frates	Yes
Committee Members	Bob Espindola, Select Board representative	Yes
	Sean Powers, Chairman	Yes
	Alyssa Botelho	No
	Cathy Melanson	No
	Nicole Antonio	No
EntryPoint	Devin Cox	Yes
	Jeff Christensen	Yes
	Bruce Patterson	Yes
Recording Secretary	Stephanie Fidalgo	Yes

Mr. Powers called the meeting to order at 6:35 PM.

**Minutes:**

**Review/ Approve Minutes from prior meeting**

As there was not a quorum present, voting on approval of the minutes of the November 4, 2021 meeting minutes was tabled for the time being.

**Discussion about the location of the fiber access buildings based on adding latest list from Wendy Graves**

Ahead of this meeting, Mr. Espindola met with both the School Department and Department of Public Works on possible fiber access buildings locations. Wendy Graves also provided a list of all parcels owned by the Town. Will select top 6 and then narrow them down to 3.

Mr. Christensen noted that there are approximately 100 addresses on the list offered. At a 50% take rate, that would result in 3,500 residences added to the fiber network which would require 2-3 access buildings.

The major questions are how close the locations are to the existing fiber loop, what is currently on the lots, and if there is room on the lots for a fiber access building. Using these guidelines, the list can hopefully be narrowed down to 10 to 15 possible candidates.

Mr. Espindola suggested to check assessor's database against the maps and then bring their list of candidates to Ms. Graves to ensure that there are no plans to sell the land in the future. He and Mr. Powers agreed to both devote time to investigating the addresses.

**Action:** Mr. Powers and Mr. Espindola to divide up and investigate the list.

Mr. Patterson previously scouted out some locations that were marked on the Biarri map. However as there were concerns about building on Elementary school property, it would be better to find other town-owned

locations nearby. Though, there was consideration of the possibility of building a hut fenced off on the East Fairhaven Elementary school grounds, but it would require the creation of a drive way for maintenance access.

Specific discussion of locations included areas around the Department of Public Works, the Sconticut Neck Water Tower, and Macomber Park on Bearnice St. Though it was noted that the park currently does not have power and would have to be added to the electrical grid.

Mr. Patterson noted that the pilot program would pay for the building and wiring of the huts. As such, picking areas with high demand can be more important than the locations themselves.

Discussion then turned to the creation of a survey to generate a heat map of interested residents. The options would either be to add the option for residents to add their residence to a heat map on the ConnectFairhaven website or creating a survey via SurveyMonkey to gather addresses. As this would be more specific than simply asking if residents would be generally interested in broadband in Fairhaven, either option would need to include language outlining the nature of the pilot program, including that neighborhoods would be chosen based on interest levels.

Mr. Powers noted that the committee has a 600 email address mailing list and Mr. Espindola also would want to get the word out via social media and newspapers if possible.

Mr. Cox went over the different methods for address capture – either a batch process of EntryPoint adding addressees to a heat map or having residents directly enter their address into the heat map. Either way, the survey would have to indicate that names and addresses would be displayed on the heat map.

Mr. Cox then noted that this functionality for a heat map already exists on the Connect Fairhaven site, it simply needs to have a the language of the page updated for the pilot project along with a “Click here to indicate interest” button added to the site homepage. The committee was directed to look at the website for the broadband project in Superior, MI [<https://www.connectsuperior.com/>] as a reference of how this process would work and how the final heat map would look. Mr. Espindola also suggested including a sample of the pilot program documentation used in Amon, ID to inform residents of what participating in the pilot program will entail.

**Action:** Mr. Powers is to work out the exact language with EntryPoint for the survey and description of the pilot program.

Mr. Espindola was hopeful to get feedback via the heat map before the end of the calendar year in order to have some information for writing a grant. Without that information, a grant application could still be made, but the committee would need to use time between submitting and receiving money to do more research.

With this timeline in mind, discussion focused on the possibility of getting an announcement in the newspaper in time for a launch of the survey on the ConnectFairhaven page by Friday, December 17th.

**Action:** Mr. Espindola to work on the press release information.

#### **Update on the RFP process (Meeting with Mark Rees)**

Mr. Espindola, Mr. Powers, and Mr. Frates all met with Mark Rees in regard to the Requests for Proposals for the broadband project. Part of the plan was to use the RFPs from Superior, MI as a starting point alongside

reaching out to other towns within Massachusetts such as Falmouth and Quincy for information. One question forwarded from Mr. Rees was if the broadband project would be utilizing a conventional bid process or design build approach?

Mr. Christensen replied that the issue with pursuing a design build approach is that it would require a Municipal Light Plant, which Fairhaven does not currently have and thus necessitated the move back to the conventional bid process.

The current plan is for the RFP's to request two bids - one for the pilot, and one for the full build-out. Mr. Rees had some concerns over receiving a full build-out bid due to difficulties with holding prices. The greater focus needs to be on working out the real cost of the pilot program, particularly for the purposes of grant applications. Project management, engineering, design, and the open access elements also all need to be settled upon for a Town Meeting ahead of a Municipal Light Plant vote.

In looking for project management, open access would have to be the principle focus with design as subordinate. A major concern would be not duplicating any of the efforts already put into the project by Biarri and EntryPoint.

**Action:** Have Mr. Patterson work with Mr. Rees on the RFP process. Mr. Christensen to send Mr. Espindola Quincy's engineering RFP.

#### **Update on State Grant Application**

Part of the reason Mr. Rees is working on the broadband project is part of a broader mission to help the town with planning how to divide up the ARPA (American Rescue Plan) funding already received and the additional funds that are incoming. These funds have specific criteria that must be adhered to in order to determine if they are limited or unlimited in what they can be used for. A meeting specifically on the ARPA funds will be arranged soon.

At Mr. Christensen's prompting, Mr. Espindola went over the time-sensitive grant identified in the Grants Office LLC report – the Coronavirus Capital Projects Fund which has a December, 27 2021 application deadline.

**Action:** Mr. Espindola to coordinate a meeting between himself, Mr. Christensen, Mr. Rees, and a Grant Office LLC consultant, starting with discussing with Mr. Rees during their Friday, December 10th meeting.

Mr. Christensen noted that EntryPoint is working on a Grant report for January. But he does not want to ignore the Coronavirus Capital Projects Fund grant as Fairhaven is further along with its process than a number of other municipalities.

#### **Timing for Next Town Meeting**

Mr. Espindola stated that the next town meeting date will tentatively be in mid-February. This project as well as a Solar project are very time-sensitive which has resulted in pushing for the meeting to happen even with the Town Administrator replacement slated to take place in mid-January. While it costs \$4,500 to put on a Town Meeting, having one could save that amount of money over various project lifetimes.

With that in mind, Mr. Christensen asserted that the key agenda item for January would be planning for the second Municipal Light Plant vote, spreading information and generating support within the town.

## **Update on Grant Opportunities & Other Regulatory Changes**

Mr. Patterson went over how money from the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act will be handed out by the Department of Commerce, with the FCC having input over the rules for broadband. Fairhaven may be best served by putting forth a new businesses model application.

States will be receiving \$100 million for broadband projects. Their first priority will be unserved communities, with underserved being secondary. Underserved is defined as an area with an average download speed of 108MBps and an upload speed of 28MBps, which Fairhaven qualifies under.

The state will then have influence on where the money is spent and the best position for Fairhaven is to make sure that state knows that the town has a project. Currently, the Massachusetts Broadband Institute will be part of the administration of this process and the hope is that they will have an increase in staffing to better process the funds. This committee should also keep in contact with the state representatives to make sure the project is known about on multiple fronts.

## **Next Meeting Date**

In discussions over the next meeting date, Mr. Christensen suggested the first Thursday of January along with the first week of February if possible to ensure two meetings ahead of the town meeting. However, due to conflicts with the Economic Development committee, Mr. Espindola suggested the second Thursday instead.

Thus, January the 13, 2022 was selected for the next meeting date. Ahead of that, members are to work on the aspects of the heat map survey launch and pilot program discussed during this meeting.

**Meeting adjourned at 8:00 PM.**