

## Broadband (Fiber Optics) Study Committee Meeting

Meeting Minutes

Thursday, February 18, 2021

Location: Zoom meeting

Committee Members present: Kim Maxwell, Bill Brown, Libby Borden, Nina Ritson, John DeShazo, Brett Robbins, Julie Scharnberg

Other attendees: Michael Halloran, Anonymous Caller

Meeting called to order: 6:01 PM

Major topics

- Minutes Approval
  - Minutes approved - Unanimous
- Agenda Approval
  - Agenda approved – Unanimous
- Project Update
  - Continuing to engage Sertex for project feedback
    - Sertex has achieved scale to demand preferential pricing from Corning (fiber wire); could benefit us
    - Reviewed cost numbers in the plan, and validated that these costs should be considered a high end estimate (ceiling) for our project
    - Torrington Project
      - Kim is helping to project manage that build
      - Sertex will be giving a formal bid for the plan in the coming weeks, which should help us refine our estimates for wire, undergrounding, Hut, etc.
  - Current to-do list timeline may be too aggressive; state funding requires following the ethics of government procurement laws
    - RFP, vendor selection, final budgeting, etc.
- Funding
  - All donors will need to be identified; alternatively, the Norfolk foundation can be a fiscal sponsor by providing commitment letters
  - Each individual will have the option to maintain anonymity
  - Ideas for raising money
    - 20-30 min Zoom meeting where Kim can present the plan to prospective donors; follow up with individuals after we present the general plan
  - Goal is to share total private sector donations prior to BOF consideration
    - If we raise \$500K per year, town will have no financial obligations for the first 3 years

- Chairman does not think the plan is viable if the town declines to contribute any funds
  - We will continue to explore (unlikely) alternative approaches that do not involve any town funding (i.e., state/federal funds, multi-town agreement)
- Current interest rates make this a very attractive time to borrow money
- Fundraising committee formed
  - Kim, Bill, John, Libby and Brett
  - Will explore raising \$5.5M (vs. \$2.5M) to provide 100% subsidy
- Within the next month, we will be able to confirm the exact, short-term costs for the town
  - No spending on dropwire – pending
  - No expense for the first 2-3 years for the trunk wiring
  - Minimal increase starting in year 4 (0.75% increase in Mill rate)
- Location for the HUT (options: Transfer station, Town Hall, Town Garage, along side the new fire house)
  - HUT maintenance (air conditioning, power generator, some electronics swaps, etc.) will be part of the contract with wire installer and will be paid for out of fees
  - Estimated cost of HUT power and maintenance: \$500/month
  - Total network general maintenance: \$7500/month (inclusive of the HUT)
- Regional activity
  - 11 towns have committees like ours
  - Kim has reviewed / prepared a regional business plan in use by each town
  - Norfolk continues to lead the pack in terms of progress
  - Kent's plan: "Follow Norfolk"
- Timeline / to-do list
  - Target BOF discussion will be next 30 days, followed by Board of Selectman meeting and finally feedback to the Committee; may not hear feedback from the BOF until April
  - Can we start engineering study early to better inform budget? Committee is very concerned about separating the engineering study from the actual implementation (i.e., feasibility)
    - Others express concern about the vendors bidding on the contract also producing the baseline engineering study
  - Nina to follow up with Mike and Matt about process to vote on Fiber Network (May budget, town vote, referendum?) →
    - What is the most practical approach to vote?
    - What other information is needed to make a decision?
- Marketing
  - Norfolk Now inserts
    - What is the cost implication for me (consumer) - March
    - Need to produce update on general costs, including philanthropic contributions – April

- Final arguments – May
  - Brochure – Direct mail only; best way to reach people during Covid
  - Upcoming message should focus on how Fiber network can drive future revenue for the town (via new home development / purchases)
  - Little challenging to plan inserts and marketing with unknown (or unlikely) vote in May → more likely to be voted upon in a special meeting
  - Will tone down some marketing – near term – in the event the vote is pushed out a few months
- Upcoming meetings
  - March 18, 2021 @ 6PM

With no further business the meeting was adjourned at 7:28 PM.

Respectfully submitted,  
Brett Robbins  
Secretary