

Broadband (Fiber Optics) Study Committee Meeting
Meeting Minutes
Thursday, January 14, 2021

Location: Zoom meeting

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

Other attendees: CATV6, J Michael Sconyers, Anonymous Caller

Meeting called to order: 6:02 PM

Major topics

- Minutes Approval
 - Minutes approved - Unanimous
- Agenda Approval
 - Agenda approved – Unanimous
- Survey Review
 - Intent of survey may have been misunderstood by participants
 - 20% town response rate (~10% of tax payers in Norfolk)
 - Full results will be published and accessible for review
 - Sooner we can get review and support from the BOF, the better
 - Majority of respondents cited concerns about cost
- Government subsidy and involvement
 - Governor Lamont
 - Planning to introduce a bill oriented around universal “high speed” coverage including requiring the incumbents to provide service to all residents
 - Made comments that the private carriers should decide what is best for each reason
 - Very likely that means DSL for the most rural and sparsely populated places → Norfolk
 - Concerned that it will still be 3-5 years before any money flows from government subsidies
 - CT does not qualify under Tier 1 ; will qualify for \$1B, but likely not for 5 years
 - Could be as long as 15 years until subsidies really flow to Norfolk
- GIS Report Review
 - Do we need to do a deeper review of available underground conduit?
 - Sertex or any service provider is not going to assess each individual conduit until they have secured the job

- BOF suggestion → we should have as much information as possible about the number of aerial vs. underground installations to hone in on the total cost of the program
 - Committee agrees that as much information as possible will be better
 - Need to find someone to drive homes and estimate actual above/underground
 - Bill and Libby will find someone; target <\$25/hour; estimated 30 hours
- Marketing
 - Brochure + Norfolk Now Insert are upcoming
 - Critical to report on survey results to show the town we are listing to them and incorporating their thoughts into our plan
- Presubscription
 - Proposal to require an actual pay upfront subscription with incentives to homeowners who sign up
 - Waive \$200 per home fee for above ground installs
 - Guarantee funding (or portion of funding) for underground installations who presubscribe
- Reactions from the BOF
 - J Michael Sconyers comments
 - Real reservations about the town “owning” any portion of the service
 - No liability or ownership of wires or any infrastructure
 - Does not want to support an investment where the town becomes a utility
 - Norfolk Sewer case study is a good example of why the town should not take on this responsibility
 - There are a lot of competing expenses (i.e., infrastructure projects that require critical investment), which will make it very hard to approve this plan
 - The most the town can do is finance this project
 - All business parties must be separate from the town
 - The town is open to collecting service fee benefits as a result of financing the project
 - Could we partner with one other town to reduce risk / improve appetite in our town
 - No other town that has done this (so far) was in the same position as us (i.e., existing electric utility)
 - MA towns that received grants had no cable TV and very poor sell service
 - Also received significant help from local utility
 - More homes = more money; this isn’t something that will decrease in cost as it scales
 - If the town doesn’t own the wire, it will be challenging to do a long term cooperative across participating towns
- Upcoming meetings

○ Thursday, January 28, 2021 @ 6PM

With no further business the meeting was adjourned at 7:40 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Brett Robbins
Secretary