

Town of Auburn
Citizen Fiber Broadband Advisory Committee
June 28, 2021
Minutes
7:00 PM

Members Present: Keith Leclair, Sean Finegan, David Oliveira, Chris Rolfe, Beth Thomerson, and Jess Edwards

Others Present: Town Administrator William Herman and Nancy Hoijer, Recording Secretary

Call to Order

Mr. Leclair called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM.

Mr. Leclair noted the Board of Selectmen accepted the resignation of Jan Gonsalves at their last meeting.

Report on Contacts with Other Municipalities

Mr. Rolfe will reach out to the representative from Westmoreland before the next meeting.

Mr. Finegan noted he did not speak to the Troy representative, but watched the video presentation they had for which he had provided a link to the committee members. He noted they discussed hiring an outside consultant. The bond was almost \$2 Million.

Mrs. Thomerson reported she spoke with a representative from Chesterfield who noted Comcast has a habit of not responding to the Request for Information (RFI). They will offer to upgrade DSL. Customer service was reported to be not great, but the technicians were. Communication was the biggest hurdle. If the article is passed at Town Meeting in March of the coming year it could be ready to go the following March. The provider quoted 24 months. During the pandemic many learned good internet is infrastructure.

Discussion of Broadband Review Process

Mr. Edwards questioned whether the Town would qualify with the minimum standard and Mr. Herman noted they heard from Comcast today and would have their information package at the end of the week. The deadline is July 5th. Mr. Herman noted that having access does not mean 25/3 is coming to a house. He also reported Consolidated's information indicates none of their service spots in Auburn meet the standard we asked for with the download being greater but the upload being smaller, i.e., 40/2 does not meet 25/3 because the second speed is smaller than the minimum. A non-response is equivalent to not meeting minimum service. Mr. Finegan questioned the report from Consolidated and the addresses provided over 70 pages and shared a copy of the map they provided. Mr. Herman noted this is where service is available not necessarily subscribers and the Town specifically requested phone only customers not be

included. It was noted even if an address has 25/3 service there are examples of when they could be considered underserved that were witnessed during the pandemic with multiple family members needing access at the same time for work and school. Mr. Leclair noted the school may be a customer, they have fiber. Mr. Rolfe asked about data caps and Mr. Leclair indicated Consolidated said they did not have data caps.

Mr. Herman noted he could bring in a bond counsel from Devine Millimet when the Committee is ready.

The Committee discussed the \$10 fee that pays the bond and interest and whether this is passed onto subscribers only not taxpayers. Mr. Leclair reviewed the rates ranging from \$69.99 to \$79.99. The Committee discussed the bond repayment term of 20 years and what happens years 21-30 when it becomes a profit to the Town. Mr. Herman reported Consolidated indicated that fee is still paid to the Town as a source of revenue.

Mr. Leclair expressed concerns were the provider to file bankruptcy during the term of the bond repayment and if the Town would be liable. The Town would own the assets.

Mrs. Thomerson recommended establishing a Facebook page to get information to residents and answer questions and get feedback. Someone would need to monitor and the members could be admins. Replies could be restricted. Mr. Rolfe noted comments could be turned off. Mr. Edwards noted the Town website could be used and meeting minutes shared. A question-and-answer page could be posted.

Next Steps

Mr. Leclair noted they will have the Comcast response to the RFI to review at the next meeting and can review Consolidated's response to the RFI at the same time and determine unserved areas. Mr. Herman noted the Committee can then determine what more information they need from both and recommended having both companies come in to help digest the information they provided.

Mr. Finegan proposed sending out a survey to determine if residents want options or are happy with their current provider. Mr. Leclair noted historically there is a lack of response.

Mr. Leclair recommended following up on the liability concerns if the provider were to file bankruptcy.

Review Previous Meeting Minutes

- **May 17th**

Mr. Edwards motioned to approve the May 17, 2021 minutes. Mrs. Thomerson seconded the motion. A vote was taken, all were in favor, the motion passed unanimously.

- **June 14th**

Mr. Edwards motioned to approve the June 14, 2021 minutes. Mr. Finegan seconded the motion. A vote was taken, all were in favor, the motion passed unanimously.

Next Meeting/Events

The next meeting will be June 19, 2021 at 7 PM.

Adjourn

Mr. Edwards motioned to adjourn the meeting at 8:04 PM. Mrs. Thomerson seconded the motion. A vote was taken, all were in favor, the motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy Hoijer, Recording Secretary