

On behalf of the entire Board of Selectmen, let me take this opportunity to wish you the Best Holidays ever and a Healthy, Happy New Year.

We do have one issue that is critical for our town that will be addressed at a Town Meeting for approval in late January and that is whether or not the town approves spending money to ensure that the town has universal fiber optic broadband for all residents of our town. When we had a Town Meeting 5 years ago, this was one of the most important issues that I thought the town needed to address. As of today, almost everyone is aware that companies hired by Frontier have been putting up fiber optic cable around the town. This wire is called feeder wire and is the equivalent of a large water main that will be used to branch out into distribution lines that go to individual houses. Frontier has a plan that will support 350 homes in our town but will not connect 268 residences on the more thinly populated roads in our village. If we want these homes connected Frontier is asking us to pay up to \$725,000 to offset their costs in providing this coverage. We will negotiate this sum downward and will establish that we can prepay at any time and work with the BOF and state representatives to receive the best benefit of new opportunities for fiber funding.

I realize that this seems to be a huge amount of money for our village. On the other hand, we are paying \$700,000 to replace a culvert on Cobble Road which probably three quarters of our village residents have never driven over. Yet, we can't let it continue to disintegrate as some of our residents use the road daily and will have to use it when we replace a bridge further up the road, closer to route 63, that is failing. Fortunately, because this bridge is classified as a federal one, the federal government will pay for it entirely.

The installation of fiber optic cable will be financed over a 25-year period. The cost of this is relatively cheap. For instance, if you pay \$5000 in taxes per year to the town, your bill would increase \$40. This is a small amount in light of what you are achieving. A robust, long-term solution that will future-proof our town.

Looking at the costs, to you as an average homeowner, they will go down substantially each month. We have calculated that the average homeowner pays a minimum of \$60 monthly for internet, \$60 for phone, including long distance, and \$100 for a middle tier television package. The total cost is \$220. The new service from Frontier would cost \$40 per month for 500 megabits symmetrical service, (a better service by far), \$10 for their VOIP service which is phone over internet, and \$50 for a premium television service of your choice, (almost all of these services support local stations). This amounts to a monthly cost of \$100 per month thus saving each resident \$100 per month on average or \$1200 per year. You can compare your costs individually to calculate how much you would save using your own inputs. Some of us will save more, some less, depending on the services you currently utilize.

If we had to provide such a service universally in our village, it would cost us between \$3.2 and \$3.6 million dollars. Using this as a basis, providing service to 268 of our 650 homes and businesses would cost us between \$1.3 and \$1.5 million dollars. Frontier, because of efficiency and having to solely do a wrap on their old wired lines, can do it much more cost-effectively. And, again, let me point out that negotiations are ongoing on the cost to us. The \$725,000

figure is a maximum in my opinion.

Besides the economic cost data supplied above, let me make a few very critical points on why this is a crucial step forward for the Town of Canaan. First, while there is federal money being doled out to states, given the politics of how this money will be doled out, I highly doubt we will get any of it but we will do our best to get some of it.

Conversely, by opting to approve this proposal, we will have a much more robust system of fiber to the home which operates at 99.97 effectiveness over a yearly period. Frontier notes that this amounts to outages of 2.5 hours per year. This may seem too optimistic but that has been their experience over time with the fiber that they installed over the past few years in 37 states. Fiber is much more resilient than cable. The service will support 8k television and 3D imaging which copper cable cannot. It allows multiple users within a single household to operate devices simultaneously without buffering, (the irritating little circle that appears on the screen). It has the capability of increasing the bandwidth of the fiber system by 20-fold or more, thus assuring that it will be here for the long term and nothing is faster, it works at the speed of light.

Importantly, it will provide the opportunity for installation of small mobile phone antennas that would eliminate the 'dead zones' that our current towers cannot reach. This is a critical safety issue in our hilly terrain. During the last power outage, some residents had to drive around to seek a cell signal to report an emergency.

Realize that you do not have to make a switch from your current suppliers. That is up to you. By approving this funding, you are supporting equity in education and job opportunities for everyone in Canaan.

Finally, fiber optic is crucial in an evolving world, where more and more of our services are delivered online. It is a draw to home owners and gives us the advantage of drawing in those high value workers who can commute remotely. Falls Village is a wonderful place to live and we can future-proof our town and make it the best option for those looking for our particular charm with a community that has a real sense of place.

Below I have attached the presentation made by Frontier last week and a couple of articles that might be of interest to you. Let's support this initiative because it makes economic sense, it puts all residents on an equal footing and will save us money in the long run.

Blog 1.7.2022

On Saturday, we are distributing a limited number of test kits and masks at the new Emergency Services Center on Route 7 South. Our Emergency Management Director Michelle Hansen asked me to share the following announcement with you:

"The Town of Canaan/Falls Village was allotted another 90 test kits. This is still a very limited supply. There will be a distribution of N95 masks and test kits to the public on Saturday, January 8th from 10AM to 12 Noon or as long as supplies last. One kit, containing two tests, will be given to per household. Proof of residency is required. The distribution will take place at Emergency Services Center and ask that you enter the North entrance and exit at the South. Please remember that this is an active firehouse and, if any emergencies happen, the trucks and first responders must be able to get in and get out. So DO NOT line up before 10 AM. If you do so, you will be asked to leave and come back. We also remind you to not block the bay doors and to immediately exit after getting your distribution."

We are pleased to get these supplies and realize that the number is again limited. More kits are being distributed in those areas with higher infection incidence and fortunately we are not yet one of them. Please wear your masks, take the usual precautions to keep you and others safe and note that the all Town meetings have been moved back to Zoom. Let's keep Falls Village as safe as we can taking into account the extremely infectious nature of the new variant Omicron.

Henry W. Todd

