

Broadband Commission
May 24, 2021, 6:00 p.m. by Zoom
Regular Meeting Minutes

Call to Order: Chairman John Morosani called the regular meeting to order at 6:03 p.m. with John Bongiorno, Erich Marriott, Stephen Simonin, Jeffrey Zullo, Burke Gibney (Alt.), Stephan Krucker (Alt.) present. Bruce Schnitzer arrived at 6:18 p.m.
Others present: Kim Maxwell, Denise Raap

Approval of Minutes: **Motion:** E. Marriott moved to approve the minutes of the special meeting on April 26, 2021, and J. Zullo seconded. All voted aye except S. Simonin who abstained and the motion carried.

Public Comment: None

Old Business:

A) Possible Federal Money in Infrastructure Bill for Broadband - Discussion with Kim Maxwell, President of Northwest ConneCT

K. Maxwell shared possible federal funding opportunities. First he mentioned a \$288B program with the National Telecommunications Information Association (NTIA), within the Department of Commerce. It's for small communities, our towns would all qualify. He will share more information after review.

The bigger opportunity is \$80B for construction in the infrastructure bill if it passes in its present form. \$16B of that is for Tier 3 service which is 1 gigabit symmetric, thus fiber required. However the \$64B is split between Tier 1 which is 25 megabit symmetric and Tier 2 which is 100 megabit symmetric.

Kim believes Optimum intends to connect our 9 towns but the network they are proposing is sub-optimal. One problem is the battery backup if the network goes down in a weather event is only 5 hours. He recommends an effort to get the 9 towns together to consolidate a position that would offer each town some public facilities for indoor mounting of electronics with generator backup. Then we would look to create a public-private partnership with the 9 towns as public partners and Optimum as the private partner to apply for federal grant \$. The \$ would reduce Optimum's cost and in return they would build a better network. He expects grant opportunities will be available sometime in 2022.

Kim will use the network cost estimates for Norfolk and Torrington from their first level engineering studies to estimate the cost to build a fiber network in each town within 20% accuracy. The only cost not included in the analysis is underground drop wire to the home for the homes that are too far from the road. He recommends we do what Norfolk and Sharon have done; use a GIS map and the grand list to measure distances from the road to see which houses will need underground wiring and for what distance. Then use \$10/ft and figure out the total network cost within 20%.

B) HB-6442

K. Maxwell said the problem is there isn't any \$ in the bill so it's dependent on the carriers signing up and spending the \$ which they told him they aren't going to do.

C) Broadband Survey

J. Morosani reported all the mail-in surveys have been entered. 162 provided their email addresses to receive more information.

New Business:

A) How do we report broadband survey results

J. Zullo suggested presenting the results of the survey at the Town Facilities Review Committee public hearings. J. Morosani said he would write a summary of the findings for the commission to approve at our next meeting that would be delivered to the Board of Selectmen and shared with the facilities committee.

B) Future of Litchfield Broadband Commission

J. Morosani briefly discussed expanding our mission to monitor the Altice upgrade and also pursue a consortium with the other towns to partner with Altice to apply for federal grant money as K. Maxwell suggested. D. Raap suggested the commission serve in such an oversight role and work on this effort with the other towns. J. Morosani will draft an amendment to our mission for discussion at the next meeting.

Next Meeting: The next Commission meeting will be June 28, 2021 at 6:00 p.m.

Adjournment: **Motion:** E. Marriott moved to adjourn. S. Simonin seconded. All voted aye and the meeting adjourned at 7:01 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by:

Burke Gibney
Recording Secretary