

Grafton County, New Hampshire
Grafton County Broadband Committee Meeting
MINUTES
Thursday, January 14, 2021
1:00 PM
Town Offices
125 Main St. Littleton, NH

Call to Order at 1:11 PM by Nik Coates.

ATTENDANCE: Carina Park (Town Administrator, Campton), Brigitte Codling (Town Manager, Haverhill), Mike Samson (Town Administrator, Canaan), Andrew Dorsett (Town Manager, Littleton), Nik Coates (Town Administrator, Bristol). A quorum was met.

Members of the Public: Attorney Shawn Tanguay (Bristol, NH), John Adams (Orford, NH)

NONPUBLIC SESSION

MOTION #1: Samson made a motion to go into NONPUBLIC SESSION at 1:29 PM pursuant to RSA 91-A, 2:d to consider acquisition of personal property. Park seconded the motion.

Roll Call Vote: Mike Samson (Aye), Carina Park (Aye), Nik Coates (Aye). The motion passed unanimously.

The Committee came out of NONPUBLIC SESSION at 2:00 PM.

Coates reconvened the meeting at 2:02 PM following a short recess.

Andrew Dorsett announced that he resigned his position in Littleton, NH, and accepted the position as a Grafton County Administrator.

MOTION #2: Dorsett made a motion to approve sealing the minutes of the NONPUBLIC SESSION of January 14, 2021, for 1 year. Samson seconded the motion.

Roll Call Vote: Mike Samson (Aye), Carina Park (Aye), Andrew Dorsett (Yes), Nik Coates (Aye). The motion passed unanimously.

Samson wished to apologize to the online attendee for waiting through the NONPUBLIC SESSION.

MINUTES REVIEW

MOTION #3: Samson made a motion to approve the meeting MINUTES from **October 28, 2020**, and **December 23, 2020**. Codling seconded the motion.

Roll Call Vote: Mike Samson (Aye), Andrew Dorsett (Yes), Carina Park (Aye), Brigitte Codling (Aye), Nik Coates (Aye). The motion passed unanimously.

DATA GATHERING AND GAPS ANALYSIS

Coates provided an overview of the discussion to focus on what internet companies exist and what are the needs of the residents and businesses of Grafton County.

Survey Overview

Park reported on the Google Docs form survey developed for the Committee stating that she

borrowed questions from the Coos County Broadband Survey, the North Country Council Survey, and from other entities and focused on both residential and commercial needs.

The Committee was asked to provide revisions to the Survey in 1 week and then move ahead to launch the survey. The Committee discussed the most suitable platform and plan for disseminating the survey.

Role of Grafton County Commissioners

Coates asked the members about inputting information to the Commissioners. Samson suggested having a schedule for communicating with the Commissioners. Park recommended notifying the contact person Julie of the Committee's progress. Coates suggested inviting Julie to the next Committee meeting.

RFI (Request for Information)

Codling noted that the work on the RFIs is in progress.

Samson stated that the NH Electrical Co-op (NHEC) might be an entity to invite to the Committee's meetings. Coates stated that he received a letter from the Co-op Broadband Committee, but the build-out for Grafton County was not clear. Samson noted that it is part of the Committee's mission to communicate with broadband providers and that the providers, specifically NHEC, be invited to a meeting and then provide a summary of the RFIs to the Commissioners.

PUBLIC COMMENT

John Adams (online) stated that the NHEC announced that Grafton County is a priority, and they are underway towards a 6-year requirement to have broadband in place. Adams discussed the Committee's Survey noting that SW Regional Planning Commission might be a guide for the survey.

Adams noted that information and minutes relating to the Committee's meetings has not been available.

Adams asked about the suppliers that the Committee is tracking, which would be four in Grafton County. Samson was aware of eight providers, such as residential and business providers and the network-level providers.

SUMMARY

Coates summarized the discussion stating that the members:

- Requested that the NHEC to be invited to attend the next meeting.
- Requested to invite Julie and the County Administrator to the next meeting.
- Agreed to report to the Commissioners regularly.
- Want to release an RFI, but only after the Commissioners have been apprised.
- Requested that Agendas and Minutes be posted in a timely manner on the Grafton County website.

MOTION #4: Samson made a motion to approve the above SUMMARY as the operating plan for the next few meetings. Dorsett seconded the motion.

Roll Call Vote: Mike Samson (Aye), Andrew Dorsett (Aye), Carina Park (Aye), Brigitte Codling (Aye), Nik Coates (Aye). The motion passed unanimously.

ROUTES AND MAPPING

Coates introduced the discussion of the priorities of the backbone concept.

Samson stated that the backbone is the primary transmission system that is fiber optic and should be integrated across the entire county. The Committee's primary mission as previously stated is to have a backbone in every community and to be a clearinghouse of all the broadband information available.

Coates stated that the letter from NHEC reiterates that they will be the backbone provider. Coates stated that a meeting with NHEC will be important.

PUBLIC COMMENT, cont.

Adams stated that he had a conversation with the fiber optic provider in Orford and noted that there are many redundancies from many providers.

Samson noted that even with the redundancies, there are areas without any fiberoptic lines.

Adams stated that NHEC is not in his area as part of the development of a fiberoptic system. Adams did note that the provider Valley Net who is servicing Lyme, NH, is cross-training their staff to repair fiberoptic lines, as well as power lines.

Adams offered contact information for NHEC: Bill Darcy at darcyw@nhec.com.

Coates noted that a true backbone around the county would cost in the order of \$100 million, and he would like to see how that lines up with the NHEC stated cost of \$6.8 million. As a definition clarification, Coates noted that the backbone is the trunk line (essentially state highways) not street lines or drops.

Samson noted that the question to the providers is not only the mapping of the trunk lines, but also how many trunk lines have connections with residences or businesses. Then, Samson relayed that once the trunk lines and drops of identified, the gaps will be easily identified.

FUNDING SOURCES

Dorsett reported on Katelyn Robinson, Director of Economic Development (krobinson@ncic.org), from Northern Community Investment Corporation in St. Johnsbury, NH, who is working on grant funding for projects in Littleton. Dorsett noted that the Committee could use their funding to obtain technical assistance to identify additional funding for the initial phase of the project. This investment corporation could be a good resource for this Committee.

Coates and Dorsett expressed that state money will soon be available for business development in NH and broadband is an important issue.

The Committee agreed that Coates address funding when he meets with Robinson.

Follow Up / Meetings

- Northern Borders Regional Commission (NBRC; <https://www.nbrc.gov/>)

Coates met with the Commission, and they are soon to have a \$5 million release towards broadband. NBRC wanted to see other sources of funding.

- Economic Development Administration
(<https://www.eda.gov/resources/directory/states/nh.htm>)

Coates reported that this agency expressed ideas on broadband projects.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATES

Coates stated that he talked with Councilor Kenney (Executive Council District 1), Senator Bradley (District 3), and Senator Giuda (District 2) to meet tentatively in July to discuss their support for broadband, as well as RSA 33 and the legislative fix that is needed.

Representative Egan (District 2), Representative Tucker (District 5), Senator Hennessey (District 1), and Representative Linda Massimilla (District 1) all have expressed interest in the past to address RSA 33.

Coates noted that he and Dorsett may need assistance in following up and engaging the legislators.

Dorsett mentioned another legislator Representative Joe DePalma (District 1) who may offer input.

Coates noted that only three members of the Committee will be invited to join the meeting with the legislators.

Coates mentioned that he is in communication with Jeanne Shaheen's and Maggie Hassan's staff to help get buy-in with the stimulus money.

BUDGET REQUEST RESPONSE

Coates noted that the item has been discussed.

PUBLIC COMMENT, cont.

Adams stated that he has no further comments.

MEMBER COMMENTS

Parks asked about the next meetings.

NEXT MEETINGS: January 27, 2021, (cancelled) and February 24, 2021, at 10:00 AM

MOTION #5: Samson made a motion to adjourn, and Park seconded the motion.

Roll Call Vote: Mike Samson (Aye), Carina Park (Aye), Andrew Dorsett (Abstains), Brigitte Codling (Aye), Nik Coates (Aye). The motion passed with four "Ayes" and one abstention.

The meeting ADJOURNED at 3:04 PM.

Transcribed by Joanna Bligh