

**Grafton County, New Hampshire**  
**Grafton County Broadband Committee Meeting**  
**MINUTES**  
**Wednesday, December 23, 2020**  
**10:00 AM**  
**Bristol, NH, Town Office**  
**Meeting Room A**  
**5 School Street, Bristol NH 03222**

**Call to Order** at 10:25 AM by Nik Coates.

Coates informed the attendees of a technology glitch related to screen sharing. Coates read and amended the Agenda aloud, as follows:

**Meeting Minutes:** To approve the Meeting Minutes from 10-28-20. With no screen sharing, the Committee tabled the Minutes review until the next meeting.

**Meeting with Grafton County Commissioners:** To spend 20 minutes to 25 minutes on discussion of the meeting attended by Carina Park, Mike Samson, and Coates relating to funding opportunities with the Commissioners.

**Review of Maps:** To introduce Kevin Glynn (eX<sup>2</sup>).

**Business Case and Models:** To discuss business models by Samson and Glynn.

**Review Survey / Release Schedule and Plan:** To discuss the survey Park and others put together.

**Review of Meeting and Planning for Meeting #4:** To discuss miscellaneous items and next meeting date.

**Committee Members' Items:** To make any additions to the discussion by members.

**Public Comments:** To allow the public to speak on County broadband issues.

**ROLL CALL ATTENDANCE:** Carina Park (Town Administrator, Campton; excused), Brigitte Codling (Town Manager, Haverhill; excused), Mike Samson (Town Administrator, Canaan), Andrew Dorsett (Town Manager, Littleton), Nik Coates (Town Administrator, Bristol)

**Members of the Public:** Kevin Glynn (eX<sup>2</sup> Technology, <https://www.ex2technology.com/>), Timothy Egan, Eric Meth, Bonnie Labrie

**Recap of the Meeting with the Commissioners**

Samson stated that the Broadband Committee members who attended asked the Commissioners for help with legal and technical services. The members explained their work stating that the goal is for every town in the County to have access to broadband. The members stated that the Committee is focused on acting as a resource for towns to implement service to residents and with providing information on funding options for towns.

Samson noted that the Committee is looking for \$15,000 to provide technical assistance. The Committee is awaiting a response from the Commissioners.

Coates noted that a letter was sent to the Commissioners, which made the request formal, for a budget of up to \$15,000 to get started.

Coates received an informal consensus of approval of the broadband project from the Commissioners. The formal response to the financial request is to come.

### **Review of Maps: Gaps and Possible Backbone Routes**

Kevin Glynn of eX<sup>2</sup> Technology was director and project manager of the Bristol, NH, broadband project. Glynn began the discussion of his background working with telecommunications. Glynn described the Fiber-to-Home project in Bristol, which the eX<sup>2</sup> Technology company implemented and which will support the municipal network.

Coates explained the workings of the Committee to attendees online stating that the “backbone theory” is based on how a framework of broadband can be built along corridors and towns could locate funding to expand from the backbone into their towns. This network would facilitate economic development in towns around the County. Glynn and Coates created a map to show the potential of the backbone network and expansion. [The screen sharing glitch prevented Coates from showing this map to the members.]

Coates noted that funding could come from the new stimulus bill (12-27-20), which allows \$7 billion of funds for broadband. Funding could also come from bonding (RSA 33).

Glynn resumed discussion of the backbone system.

Layers of the backbone with a loop architecture:

- Layer zero: Outside plant portion and pole (aerial) or buried infrastructure, which the fiber is placed on.
- Layers one to three: Electronics of routing and switching.
- Loop architecture: Provides redundancy; if one part of the infrastructure is interrupted, other parts take over so there is no interruption in traffic.

Glynn continued that once the backbone is in place, towns or aggregate points use providers to distribute services—fiber-to-home (business, school, and municipality).

Samson stated that there are numbers of backbones from multiple entities throughout the state, and there are any providers who will install service to the homes or businesses. With so any parts in the communications network, it is not simple and is a very diverse process.

### **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

**Timothy Egan (Grafton District; County Executive Committee member-at-large):** Egan stated that he supported House Bill 1111 (Communications) and suggested that the “backbone” idea be worked into regions. Egan addressed alternative funding, such as the Farm Bureau innovation and Northern Border funds. Egan asked, “What in RSA 33 needs to be adjusted?” Egan discussed funding through the NH Finance Authority and some banks.

Samson responded [garbled] with a discussion of funding from public-private partnerships, tax-increment financing, and the State of NH revenue bond. Further discussion on bonding continued.

Coates stated that changes in the RSA would open opportunities, with changes as follows:

- Removal of 25-3 standard.
- Change of language that state municipalities can bond, but counties cannot bond.
- Identify what kinds of bonds counties are allowed to do on these projects and remove the Communications Districts to county districts, which are already established entities.

**Eric Meth (Selectboard member, Town of Franconia):** Meth stated that he is part of a Communications District meeting between Sugar Hill and Franconia.

### **Business Case and Models**

Coates reintroduced Glynn to talk about business models. Glynn stated that service connections in towns in Grafton County would use middle-mile networks and, once in the towns, there are many business models depending on town size. Glynn discussed how to access grants (some with local match) for development projects. Discussion continued introducing anchor tenants, return on investment, maintaining infrastructure, and how every town will be different.

Glynn opened a discussion about health care communications, such as telehealth. Discussion resumed.

Samson summarized the discussion, including these key points:

- Sustainability—The projects must work financially.
- Locating funding sources.
- Competence in management and workforce.
- Accountability to consumers.

Samson discussed a document distributed premeeting to the members, the Monadnock Broadband Implementation Guide, which is a valuable tool with a NH perspective. Samson also provided premeeting three documents for members’ review:

- King, A., “Rural Electric Co-Op Expands Access to Fiber Optic Network During the Pandemic,” *Broadband Communities*, August/September 2020. Available at [broadbandcommunities.com](http://broadbandcommunities.com)
- Hovis, J., Baller, J., Talbot D., Blake, C. “Public Infrastructure/Private Service Model for 21st Century: Broadband Proves Worthy,” *Broadband Communities*, November/December 2020. Available at [broadbandcommunities.com](http://broadbandcommunities.com)
- Consolidated Communications, Master Service Agreement.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS:** None.

### **Review Survey and Release Schedule and Plan**

Coates asked the Committee members to review the survey and noted to the listeners that the survey was developed to gather data on the broadband needs within Grafton County. At the next meeting in January, Carina will go through the survey, and the members should be prepared to release the survey after the next meeting.

Glynn volunteered to look at the survey for his input.

### **Review of Meeting and Planning for Meeting #4**

Coates reported that Codling was unable to attend, but is working on the RFIs and what services currently exist in the County.

Samson noted that e911 overlays will allow this Committee to see what is covered and what is not.

Bonnie Labrie reported on HUB66 (<https://www.hub66.com/>) and a discussion she had with CEO Beth Bumbarger. Labrie found that the company is new and working towards hiring employees and taking over lines. HUB66 has no contracts, they charge a flat rate of \$89/month with 200 MB guaranteed, and they have a low-income plan.

Egan entered the conversation and reported on the providers of wireless in Franconia, which has repeater towers on Cannon Mtn. and Mt. Agassi in Bethlehem.

Samson noted that once the towns hook into the backbone, the questions remain:

- Are the distributing providers tied into that access?
- How competitive will their service be?

Coates discussed the last-mile broadband or wireless coverage. Glynn responded stating that in another project the provider was given a grant to complete the last-mile residences. Coates noted that in Bristol, the town is using USDA Rural Development Programs to get service to the last-mile homes.

### **Legislative**

Tim Dorsett will provide more information in January.

### **Anything Else from the Members?**

No more comments.

### **Anything Else from the Public?**

Coates heard none.

### **Anything Else from Kevin Glynn?**

Glynn closed with the phrase: "Speed to market."

**DATE OF NEXT MEETING:** Wednesday, **January 27, 2021**, at 10:00 AM.

### **ADJOURN**

**MOTION:** Samson made the motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Coates.

**Roll Call Vote:** Mike Samson (Aye), Andrew Dorsett (Yes), Nik Coates (Aye).

The meeting was ADJOURNED at 12:11 PM.

*Transcribed by Joanna Bligh*