

Grafton County, New Hampshire
Grafton County Broadband Committee Meeting
MINUTES
Wednesday, February 24, 2021
10:00 AM

DRAFT subject to review by the Committee.

Call to Order at 10:02 AM by Nik Coates.

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

Members of the Public:

Bill Darcy (NHEC)	John McAdams
Beth Bumbarger (HUB66)	Don Vaillancourt
Robert Cruickshank (NH Broadband)	Bonnie Labrie
Paul Hayes	Michael Mateja (HUB66)
Julie Libby	
Alasdair Dunlap-Smith	

NONPUBLIC SESSION

MOTION #1: Park made a motion to go into NONPUBLIC SESSION at 10:03 AM pursuant to RSA 91-A, 2:d. Samson seconded the motion.

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

The Committee came out of NONPUBLIC SESSION at 11:04 AM.

Coates reconvened the meeting at 11:06 AM.

HUB66 -- Beth Bumbarger, CEO, and Michael Mateja

Coates introduced Bumbarger and Mateja to the members. Bumbarger stated that her company was started because she identified no internet availability in the Lakes Region and in the mountainous areas of Northern NH where installation is cost prohibitive. She explained that HUB66 is a hybrid model to get high speed internet to everyone. The HUB66 team looks at areas and finds solutions to bring internet to every community. Mateja noted that they are a problem-solving company and look for the underserved communities. Codling asked what technology they use. Mateja responded that HUB66 brings fiber to individual homes with fixed wireless that mounts on a cell tower to do a fixed broadcast or a hybrid approach, which consists of multiple poles every quarter mile with a mesh system. Mateja stated that in downtown areas, they may do a rooftop broadcast. Mateja stated that the HUB66 network does not rely on individual hosts. They install the mesh networks on utility poles where they can get utility power or solar battery backup. Mateja explained the process of servicing a downtown area and some new technology with 2.5 GB speeds. Bumbarger stated that the company does not use anyone else's fiber lines, but HUB66 partnered with First Light who purchased all the fiber "roads," and HUB66 was able

to splice into the system. Codling asked once the network is installed who owns the system. Mateja stated that the company has many options—First Light owned, town owned, or other creative relationships. Bumbarger noted that First Light has 200 crews, so in an emergency service is fixed fast. Bumbarger noted that their lowest service speed is 50 MB.

Coates noted that today's meeting is to gather information and the Committee will be hearing information from many other providers over time.

Bumbarger stated that her company has a revenue share program that can be offered.

Mateja addressed the no lower than 50 MB service stating that all fiber feeds are symmetrical and recently they have been offering a 100 MB service at discount rates. Mateja discussed the wireless speeds. Mateja noted that they work with First Light, but are open to working with other companies.

Coates asked HUB66 if they would consider backbone development on a county level. Mateja stated that the company has not given much thought to that because they worked in Vermont and did not see much value in that proposition there. Mateja continued saying that when developing backbone connectivity, the same pole licensing works and along the way residences can be connected. Bumbarger stated that if the Committee wanted to build-out the county, they could show the Committee where the lines are and how to bring everyone into it, and that would be a proposal they would entertain.

Samson asked how HUB66 could compete in the marketplace. Bumbarger stated that her company has the best of all technologies, the best customer service, the best prices, and the best community cooperation in the market today. Mateja discussed the installation differences with HUB66.

Public Comments

John Adams (Orford, NH) stated that there is a main line along the river, but most of the town is west of that and there is not any kind of broadband over most of the town. Mateja responded that they would look at existing fiber and what can be used or what needs to be new. Then the budget is worked out. The proposals are customized for every town.

Coates thanked Bumbarger and Mateja for their presentation.

COUNTY COMMISSIONERS MEETING

Coates stated that he and Samson attend the Commissioner's meeting and they were generally appreciative. The Commissioners were updated on the Committee's work, including:

- Meetings with providers
- Legislative lobbying
- Seeking other funding along with County funding, including the SB85 bill.

Coates added that Andrew Dorsett is in his new position as County Administrator yet will remain on the Committee, which will be a great benefit. Coates expressed to the Commissioners that skepticism around one company claiming to develop a county-wide system. Commission Chair Piper was very enthusiastic and appreciative.

WORK SESSION

Coates asked the members to plan on a work session to prepare for the next meeting with the Commissioners.

LEGISLATIVE / SB85 and SB88 (Omnibus Bill)

Coates testimony was well received by the Senate Municipal Committee. Senator Bradley was supportive. SB85 allows for a grant matching program for broadband, and Coates recommended that counties and planning are included in that funding. Coates continued that if private funding was considered that municipalities must have communication with the companies.

Coates described SB88 as an omnibus bill. Sections include adopting One-Touch Make Ready technology and having counties part of the RSA 33-4 (public bodies to develop broadband projects). Coates recommended streamline the RFI process. Discussion continued.

How to Get Started: Care Act Application / Virtual Town Hall

Friday, March 12, from 5:30 PM to 6:30 PM will be a Virtual Town Hall for all municipal leaders in Grafton County. The meeting will be moderated by Brittany Overton, Kevin Glenn, and Nik Coates from the Town of Bristol.

Survey and RFI Distribution

Codling provided the draft map RFI for discussion and suggested there could be two forms, one for maps from providers and one for other information. Codling noted that if there are inactive lines, how will those be located if we are asking only for underserved areas. Coates stated that First Light owns most of the abandoned networks.

Coates stated that Codling can distribute the RFI once the Committee has responded with any comments.

Park suggested that the Survey be distributed to the county towns and Park suggested that an introductory section be included with links to the website and a request for towns to respond with names and other information related to their internet providers.

AGENDA PLANNING

- Work session
- Preliminary data from survey
- RFI responses
- Recap the meeting with the Commissioners
- Tackling a business plan for connectivity between towns (providers may be doing this now)

MEMBER COMMENTS

- Park expressed how great the County website is with the Broadband link in place. And, she expressed thanks to Julie who provided that input and that there is now a more transparent presence.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

- Alasdair Dunlap-Smith expressed his thanks for getting the website updated and that he is keeping abreast of the process.
- Paul Hayes (*Caledonian Record*) asked to have someone explain what an RFI is.
 - Coates stated that the Committee is trying to find out where internet providers have service and where they do not and what that looks like on a map. State RFI process is two months. The Committee is trying to identify who has adequate service and who does not. Samson noted that there is also a minimum standard of service, which may only be aspirational.
- John Adams complained that the minutes were not available from one month ago.
 - Codling noted that the County only allows minutes that have been approved by the Committee, but the Town of Haverhill website has the draft Broadband Committee minutes posted.

NEXT MEETING: March 31, 2021, at 10:00 AM

Coates noted that the Zoom link is always the same for these meetings.

MOTION #2: Park made a motion to adjourn, and Codling seconded the motion.

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

The meeting ADJOURNED at 12:07 PM.

Transcribed by Joanna Bligh