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Grafton County, New Hampshire
Grafton County Broadband Committee Meeting
MINUTES
Wednesday, October 28, 2020
11:00 AM
At the
Canaan Emergency Operations Center
52 NH Route 118
Canaan, NH 03741
DRAFT subject to review by the Committee.

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Call to Order at 11:05 AM by Nik Coates.

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

Member of the Public: Bonnie Labrie (resident of Canaan), Alasdair Dunlap-Smith (Orange, NH; remote)

Coates read the Remote Meeting GUIDANCE:

"This Committee is using the ZOOM platform. For this meeting, all members of the Committee have the ability to communicate contemporaneously during the meeting. The public has access through the ZOOM platform to contemporaneously listen and participate in the meeting through the following ways: They can join ZOOM on their computer. The Agenda with the ZOOM link is on the Grafton County website. They can also join by phone through ZOOM. If anyone is having problems accessing this meeting, call 530-1765. If the public is not able to access this meeting, we will adjourn the meeting and reschedule. All votes on this remote access will be Roll Call vote. If there is a need for a nonpublic session at the end of the meeting, the moderator will announce it and take a Roll Call vote and ask that all members of the public adjourn from the meeting."

MINUTES APPROVAL

MOTION #1: Michael Samson made the motion to approve the meeting minutes from September 30, 2020. Brigitte Codling seconded the motion.

Roll Call Vote: Brigitte Codling (Yes), Carina Park (Yes), Michael Samson (Yes), Nik Coates (Yes). Motion adopted (400).

REVIEW ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Coates opened discussion for the Committee to report on roles and responsibilities:

- Define success (All members)

- Gaps analysis / RFI (Codling)

- Funding (Coates)

- Business models (Samson)

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- Legislative needs (Dorsett)

- Consumer relations / Public outreach (Park)

- Technology (Labrie)

Discussion:
Coates brought up that mapping should be categorized under Gaps Analysis and Codling noted it could be under RFI. Samson suggested that 911 mapping could be used as a base map if it is legal to use. Coates asked the members to check with their towns' fire departments or emergency management staff to see if the 911 maps are available.

Coates brought up legislative news stating that Dorsett will be presenting an update at the next meeting.

Labrie presented a discussion on the two available technologies—wired and wireless. Wireless has line-of-sight issues and does need to be wired for power. Wireless has lower initial costs, is not shared, but has data caps, slower speeds, and weather impacts. For wireless, there is also cellular technology (cell phones). With wired technology, there is copper wire and DSL. DSL has residential service with low upload and high download speeds and sDSL that has equal upload and download speeds. DSL degrades depending on distance, has security issues, and is susceptible to noise (electromagnetic fluctuations). Cable line uses insulated copper wire and is a shared line so at peak times downloads will be slower. Fiber technology converts electric signals to light and can travel 100 times faster than copper wire. Fiber is the way to go because it has a 30- to 50-year life cycle. The MESH network works on nodes, which act as repeaters, so service is consistent. Microwave technology is old technology, which is now called wireless. Samson noted that, in Canaan, microwave towers (repeaters) are used to broadcast internet service to underserved areas in the town.

Define Success
After the members reviewed the technology, Coates opened the discussion for the members to define success.

Labrie stated that the Committee should look at fiber and discover the costs and start with those with no service. Codling noted that at the last meeting the members discussed focusing on those with no service. Samson noted that for a county perspective, it's important to look at those who have no service at all and then work with towns. Park noted that there are 39 towns in Grafton County.

Park's office created a spreadsheet with all towns, town officers, and contact information as a way to distribute information and do outreach. Park is interested in creating a survey to put in front of the Committee for review.

Dunlap-Smith interjected that in his town of Orange, NH, one-fourth of the town has internet service. Samson stated that that equates to about 100 people with service in the town. Samson also noted that more definitions and information are needed for the survey forms.

Samson noted that another issue is the discrepancy or variations in local service.

Coates mentioned Mission Broadband (Michael Reed) who is consulting around the state with municipalities who want broadband, and Coates noted that a broadband survey was done, which the Committee could have access to. Coates mentioned Sanford, Maine, that has fiber network for their area, and they also have a survey, which he will help the Committee obtain.

Coats asked the members to discuss or think about whether the out-of-town to in-town project steps is a better process or something else. Samson would support this, but for economic development, high speed service is required.

REQUEST FOR INFORMATION

Review Examples
Codling suggested that the Committee should focus on what kind of service the Committee is looking for. Codling asked if the Committee should narrow its focus to find tangible results to achieve in one to two years.

Coates defined the RFI funding process: How municipalities can bond for broadband projects. He stated that if RFIs for coverage maps are not responded to in 30 days, the municipality can assume that their town is unserved, which opens the opportunity for other funding.

Coates suggested getting the survey off the ground to get data to be cross-referenced with RFI maps. There was consensus among members.

Samson suggested obtaining gateway access to the internet for towns and a cost strategy to implement connections to the nodes.

Labrie suggested send informative letter to all Graton County towns to notify them of the broadband Committee. Samson suggested that the Committee set up a website at the county level for towns to access and submit questions and information. Park stated that the Committee needs a presence, read meeting minutes, and access towns. Coates suggested that the Committee create a survey for the next meeting.

Goals

Coates opened a discussion of goals within 18 months as offered by Samson: provide gateway access for every town and provide business models, including technology reviews and cost estimates for towns. Samson noted that levels of service agreements are related to structure, including the unserved, are within and between towns. Coates mentioned EX^2 Technology (https://www.ex2technology.com/), which could help with business strategy. There was consensus among the members to meet with the EX^2 business staff for review of the broadband project in Grafton County.

Coates mentioned HUB 66 (https://www.hub66.com/), an ultrafast fiber internet company, that only focuses on municipalities, businesses, and schools, which may be a partner doing exactly what this Committee is trying to accomplish.

LEGISLATIVE NEEDS

Coates brought up the possibility of more county engagement with municipalities. Samson noted

that the Town of Canaan already uses that model for utilities. The members were in consensus about approaching their towns with the model. Samson noted that it would be important to solicit from each town's selectboard their willingness to fund this broadband project under discussion, then go to the county or write a grant for matching funds. Different options were discussed. Coates volunteered to prepare a bullet-point scope of work for submission to members' selectboards. Codling noted that this Committee represents all of Grafton County, not the individual members' towns, so she suggested first approaching the County for funds.

Park suggested for the Committee to reach out to towns to suggest that they write a warrant for the next Town Meetings to vote on adopting money in their capital reserves for adopting town-wide broadband service. Discussion continued about a broadband reserve fund for towns.

FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

Coates discussed funding to understand how to fund building a backbone, perhaps with funding by a county bond.

Coates sent to members a document related to government funding and grant opportunities for broadband initiatives, including through Northern Boarders Regional Commission (50% match); possibly stimulus money, part 2; USDA Rural Development; and the Economic Development Administration. Coates discussed burying fiberoptic lines in conduits when sewer or water lines are being put in place and, for future budgets, include the price of fiberoptic into paving costs. Coates offered the costs of aerial lines per mile, including fiber and equipment on poles, as $40,000 to $50,000.

The State of NH has a map of 911 service across the state, and Coates will plan to invite Doug Greene, of the University of New Hampshire, to attend a Committee meeting.

NEXT STEPS

Action items:

- 911 mapping

- Technology; base numbers for DSL and fiber; MESH coverage area ($50,000 for 1 mile); HUB 66 (airburst); public to commercial broadband

- Draft survey (Park); outreach to towns; page on county website

- Business models (Samson)

- Basic RFI elements (Codling)

- Legislative costs for county (Coates)

COMMENTS from MEMBERS: None.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Dunlap-Smith stated that the Orange, NH, Selectboard is asking residents to report on internet service.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING: Wednesday, **November 23, 2020**, at 10:00 AM at the Town Office in Campton.

ADJOURN

MOTION: Codling made the motion to adjourn the meeting and was seconded by Coates.
Roll Call Vote: Carina Park (Yes), Brigitte Codling (Yes), Mike Samson (Aye), Andrew Dorsett (Yes), Nik Coates (Aye).

The meeting was ADJOURNED at 12:38 PM.

Transcribed by Joanna Bligh