

BROADBAND STUDY COMMITTEE MINUTES

April 29, 2021

Present: Sean Powers, Bob Espindola, Stephanie Garde, Alyssa Botelho, Cathy Melanson, Jeff Christensen and Devin Cox-EntryPoint Networks

Absent: n/a

Cable Director, Derek Frates was also in attendance.

Mr. Powers opened the meeting and read the recording regulations. He asked if the committee had reviewed the minutes from the last 2 meetings.

Minutes: Mr. Powers made a motion to accept the meeting minutes from March 4, 2021, Mr. Espindola seconded. Ms. Melanson abstained from the vote, all others in favor, motion passed.

Mr. Powers made a motion to accept the meeting minutes from April 8, 2021, Ms. Garde seconded. Ms. Melanson abstained from the vote, all others in favor, motion passed

EntryPoint Network Update:

Jeff Christensen began with an update from the Town Meeting, draft in the works with Mr. Espindola to be scheduled. Discussion on meeting date and time. Derek will create a zoom and send to Mr. Espindola and Mr. Christensen for Monday 5/3/21 at 10am. Mr. Christensen asked if the video would go out ahead of the meeting or be reviewed at the meeting. Ms. Espindola said probably both, there is a precinct meeting on the Wednesday prior to a Saturday town meeting, it can be reviewed, and opportunity to show it then and also can be made available online with info ahead of the precinct meeting. Town Meeting is Saturday, June 12, 2021.

Mr. Frates would like to have all videos completed prior to Memorial Day weekend. He also mentioned the video could be posted online and different outlets and through social media to get the information out. Mr. Espindola asked to target completion by Friday, May 14. He also asked to confirm testimonials and intent to ensure we are on the same page. Mr. Christensen agreed local testimonials would enhance and be helpful and asked for any other input from the committee. Mr. Powers mentioned they have approximately 15 individuals who offered help through the website. Mr. Espindola asked if a few could be reached out to and if we could get a business that was interested as well. Ms. Melanson mentioned using different people other than committee members since Ms. Garde and Ms. Botelho had done the webinar and seeing different people would help.

Mr. Frates asked if we had the names of the 15 individuals. Mr. Powers said was on a tab in the spreadsheet from the email addresses for those who checked would like to participate and a tab for those who checked would like a yard sign. Mr. Frates has been adding those individuals to the email distribution list and asked Mr. Powers to send him the most recent spreadsheet. Mr. Powers referenced a resident with a business who had been on the committee, Suzanne Dwyer, and suggested she may have potential interest. Mr. Espindola asked Mr. Powers to email her and reach out to him if he does not have her email. Mr. Powers will represent the committee. Mr. Frates mentioned the video should be under 5 minutes. Script will be finalized Monday 5/3 during meeting with Mr. Christensen and Mr. Espindola.

Yard Signs Update:

Mr. Frates provided an update on the yard signs, \$500 from the budget was approved in the last meeting. Using a local company was cheaper, we can get 115 without stakes (the stakes can be borrowed to save more money)

and he can go forward with ordering. Mr. Christensen asked if a vote was needed to order, Mr. Powers said no vote needed because the amount was under the budget dollar amount previously voted on. Mr. Frates showed a proof of the sign, concern people may not realize what it is and asked if it would be worth adding a stripe to the top “vote yes on article 34, Town Meeting June 12th” and if there was a reason we decided against it. Mr. Espindola did not feel would be a problem and it would be worth adding a reference, we want to call attention to it and educate.

Discussion around the verbiage on the yard signs ensued. Mr. Frates asked if we wanted to tell them “vote yes” or how should we approach. Ms. Melanson stated adding the article number would let people know it is going to be on town meeting. Mr. Espindola said drawing attention so town meeting members would get a clear understanding of what a “yes” vote means. Mr. Frates asked if “article 34, town meeting, June 12th” would be OK. Ms. Melanson suggested adding just “article 34” would be enough because people driving by can read it quickly. Further discussion was had on placement of words and font size as well as removing “Fairhaven, Ma” to give room to resize other words. Mr. Cox made note of the updates discussed and Mr. Frates will connect with Mr. Cox by Friday 4/30 to have final proof to place order. Concern was raised on the “borrowed” stakes and potential condition when returning them and Mr. Espindola added that the people donating were not worried about the return condition. Mr. Christensen asked Mr. Frates to confirm the article number prior to placing the order. Mr. Frates confirmed distribution of signs is on next agenda.

Mr. Cox wanted to confirm line up for the second webinar on Wednesday, May 5th, he will put Ms. Botelho as a panelist and send email from zoom and asked her to reach out if she does not get the invite. Mr. Frates asked to confirm, once webinar is completed are we sending out through the email list and then a separate one about the yard signs. Mr. Cox said the yard signs will be mentioned in the webinar to promote it. There were about 30 in the webinar last time. Mr. Espindola also agreed on including. Mr. Frates then mentioned he will promote the webinar on social media and place flyers around Town Hall as well. Mr. Christensen summed up yard sign and email blast will be both webinar reminder for 5/5 and the yard signs. Mr. Frates asked who is contact if they want a sign? Mr. Powers has taken this on, Mr. Frates will include his email address in the reminder. Mr. Cox added people can be pointed to the bottom of the homepage of ConnectFairhaven where there is an option to get a yard sign and promote the network.

Links to Testimonials in Ammon:

Mr. Christensen stated links were sent to the testimonials from folks in Ammon and in terms of using, thought the video or could also put on the website and asked for other thoughts or suggestions. Mr. Espindola asked for a disclaimer or information that this is a model community for understanding purposes. Mr. Cox shared his screen to show how the layout could look and verbiage and where links to the videos could be placed. Mr. Espindola asked for info on the feasibility study and mentioned a concern on the length – how many would read through it so can high level info be pulled out? Mr. Espindola said most popular questions seem to be about cost and what is it. Mr. Powers mentioned the FAQs can be expanded. Mr. Christensen said videos can be easier to listen to if it is on point and brief. Mr. Cox pointed out the links to the videos are on YouTube right now and can be pulled down from there.

Mr. Christensen summed up the take away for the committee is to review the links and provide feedback for website or video please share with them. Mr. Frates shared the layout of the Broadband Study Page and links.

Can we email Town Meeting Members?

Question from last meeting. Mr. Christensen reviewed Mr. Espindola sent something out on it about emailing Town Meeting members to drive education, send links or videos to them. Mr. Espindola was to discuss with the Town Moderator. The thought was when the moderator sends his email about the remote Town Meeting and where booklets go out in the mail to all and electronic communication has improved, we would need to provide an example of what we think we want to share, is it the link to the ConnectFairhaven website or a video link and he asked for any other suggestions. Ms. Melanson asked if we would be setting a precedent by asking the moderator to put this info out there where others would ask for the same in the future. Mr. Espindola stated this would be a reference to a town website to explain a town article and similar to the booklet which has a written description of the article and he did not see it as different than that or a PowerPoint and that he would still check with the moderator and if the moderator felt it was not appropriate then we would not. Mr. Espindola will take it to the moderator once the outline of the video content is done on Monday 5/3 as previously mentioned.

Mr. Christensen asked if Mr. Cox could include a tab on the website specific to Article 34, Town Meeting with concise info. Mr. Cox showed what is on the ConnectFairhaven site now, when you scroll down there is a section "Why Should Fairhaven Form a Municipal Light Plant?" Suggestion was made to have a link to a separate page dedicated to the article up top where the FAQs are, what a yes vote means, link to the video. Mr. Cox asked for the text to be sent to him and he would add it, Mr. Christensen will send over and we will keep the bottom section as well and can link there to that page.

Talking to other parts of the County?

Mr. Christensen mentioned he added this agenda item because counties are getting Recovery Act money and Broadband is called out as a use. Westport seems to be moving forward with the process and New Bedford may be about to release an RFP. Discussion around what had been heard around the county. Mr. Espindola stated that Wendy Graves mentioned that on May 10th there will be some clarification on funding sources from the state and county level and better info available then. The communities mentioned are within SRPEDD and from an economic development standpoint it has come up as the three, water, sewer and broadband that the federal government is looking to incentivize. Mr. Espindola said if we were able to develop town drawing, main roads and what the network/project would look like to build off the backbone we have and traveling along all the major roads not currently on the loop. It currently travels along Rt. 6, Sconticut Neck to Hoppy's Landing, all the schools, public safety on Washington St., West Island and Public Works. Missing are Alden Road, Main St, Adams St. and across Bridge St. So, take all main roads and what the cost for the trunk lines and future build is out. Build confidence people from all parts of town will have interest and potential for the cost to be reduced with grant funds to build out.

Mr. Christensen said this would be what the role for the county would be, connecting county infrastructure and improving it. Mr. Espindola suggested looking out for Fairhaven and how the money comes to each municipality per capita, Fairhaven would have their plan to bring to the SRPEDD Commissioners. Comment on an element that can connect east and west to other communities and could it be there through Open Cape network. Mr. Powers called out the Open Cape has posted on Facebook about municipal funding for broadband too. Mr. Espindola called out example of our project to look at grant opportunities. Mr. Christensen pointed out there are 2 elements, Town of Fairhaven will get money from the Recovery Act and is there an interest from the town to spend some on this backbone or where to spend the money in a meaningful way and have impact. Mr. Espindola

said once we define the cost, we can look to multiple sources for funding, some directed and some open. Look at what other stimulus money comes for other projects, define it and see what programs could fund it. For example, a Commonwealth program called One Stop For Growth assists with finding funding for projects (a way to save time and find funding sources).

Mr. Christensen mentioned there is also an infrastructure bill in the works and an individual who is gathering information to advise the White House asked him for feedback recently. Mr. Christensen felt the “middle mile” can be problem when it does not exist and for the “last mile” it would be helpful for the federal government to provide low interest loans to towns for construction loans. This is in process, more to come.

Mr. Cox shared screen to show the updated yard sign, discussion on colors and font size/boldness.

Mr. Christensen advised Mr. Espindola he has an action item on working on a cost structure model and it is similar to work he is doing for Superior, WI.

Local Marketing Firm on Presentation:

Mr. Christensen has talked to two firms, meeting with one on Tuesday 5/4 noon our time (committee welcome to join). Plan to discuss what this committee is doing and target education of community members. May need first town meeting vote to be able to move forward. Suggestion for a Broadband Study Committee meeting after the Town Meeting vote, try and have the two firms come in to present to the committee and decide next steps. The committee in attendance agreed on this approach.

Prep For Next Webinar:

Mr. Christensen recapped, Ms. Botelho will open and then turn over to EntryPoint. Mr. Christensen asked if Mr. Cox wanted a dress rehearsal. Mr. Cox suggested the committee get on the webinar 15-20 minutes prior to the start to make sure video and audio is working. He then asked Ms. Botelho and Mr. Christensen to confirm they got the email about panelists, they did.

Ms. Botelho will review the first webinar for hosting tips. Mr. Christensen mentioned a recent panel he was on and real time polling that was done, seemed popular and asked if there was interest in doing this during the webinar as another way to engage the audience. The committee agreed this would be helpful. Mr. Christensen said he and Mr. Cox would work on it. Mr. Espindola asked if webinar would target the article or another focus like the town meeting vote or general education. Mr. Christensen explained would like to target the article if town meeting member participation can drive town meeting members to the webinar. The article will be shown and explained and also what a “yes” vote means. Ms. Garde recalled from previous feedback the interest is in moving forward vs. talking about it. There does seem to be a want for a call to action which means voting on it and to reach out to town meeting members.

Question raised if each neighborhood/resident knows who their town meeting representative is? Consensus was some will and some will not. Mr. Espindola compared it to election participation which is about 10-20% of registered voters and the number of town meeting members attending is a smaller number which means a small group will have a lot of power to make these decisions. Mr. Cox suggested put up a map to point that out. Mr. Espindola will ask if Town Clerk has on the website. Mr. Christensen suggested a link to that page as well. Mr. Espindola said it is a general information showing those with interest and good to know outside of this article,

maybe Town Clerk's Office can help promote it as well. Ms. Botelho asked if someone could call the Town Clerk's Office and ask, Mr. Espindola thought yes and did not want to overburden them with calls. Mr. Powers viewed the site and pointed out the names are there but no contact info. Mr. Christensen challenged Mr. Powers to get a yard sign to every next door neighbor of every town meeting member and he accepted the challenge.

Mr. Cox asked for consensus on the edits to the yard sign made during the meeting, the proof was chosen, Mr. Frates will take it to the printer 4/30.

Follow-Up with Wendy on Town Counsel cost for Municipal Light Plan and RFP Process:

Mr. Christensen advised he spoke with Wendy (Graves) and was advised that the response was the only cost is the legal cost to get it set up, once it is set up there would be small adjustments to the auditing process which would be an expense of the Municipal Light Plan itself. Mr. Espindola asked about the info from auditor Melanson and Heath. Mr. Christensen said this was from the bond counsel. Mr. Espindola said they received a response late today from the auditor, Melanson and Heath, saying they could not opine on the cost associated with establishing a Light Department, they could say there would be increased costs due to year end auditing and requirements that could mean the potential for separate annual audits. Mr. Espindola said Ms. Graves also reached out to Mr. Crotty (Town Counsel) for information.

RFP Process, was discussed with Ms. Graves, Mr. Christensen felt waiting for the results of the first before sending something to the IG's Office; if the vote goes the way we want then they we can initiate the process with the IG which takes about 30 days and once that is completed we would be able to go forward with the RFP along with the Broadband Study Committee's recommendation and Select Board's support. Mr. Powers and Mr. Espindola stated that was a good idea. Discussion to clarify timeline once send to IG, how long should we allow? Mr. Christensen said Quincy's was open about 20-30 days and they got 6 responses from firms, Fairhaven has at least 2 firms with interest right now. Mr. Espindola mentioned would be a good idea to review the timeframe for the Town Meeting members so they are aware. Reminder made that Town meetings are typically 1x per year, with a potential for a special town meeting in the fall as well. Mr. Christensen stated he had received the same information from Ms. Graves.

Mr. Christensen reviewed that Bruce Pattersen from EntryPoint has taken on this project and he has done several RFPs so it is under control and asked if there were other questions to discuss. No other questions or concerns were raised.

Mr. Frates asked the Committee to discuss scheduling the next meeting date. Mr. Christensen asked about availability of the committee compared to the calendar and suggested another meeting prior to the town meeting to review progress and any other preparation needed to be ready for the town meeting.

Next meeting will be on Tuesday, June 8 with time TBD.

Mr. Powers made a motion to adjourn, Ms. Melanson seconded. All were in favor, the motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Amy Almeida
Recording Secretary