
Economic Development Committee Minutes 02/17/2014

Economic Development Advisory Committee

Meeting Minutes

Recorded by Sharon Rossi

February 17, 2014

Members attending: NNickerson, PRenaud, AWood, JFletcher

Guests: Susan Corcoran & Andre Garron, UNH Cooperative Extension

7:06 p.m. PRenaud called the meeting to order. AWood motioned to accept December 16, 2013 meeting minutes. NNickerson seconded. Vote unanimous in favor. PRenaud advised there aren't any January meeting minutes as no quorum was present.

SCorcoran began with congratulations on being selected to work with UNH on the broadband mapping and planning program.

AWood pointed out that the maps were wrong in the pamphlet. AGarron said the maps were printed in 2012 with information provided by service providers and they consider this as accurate. The data was also gathered by census block, of which there are about 4 for the town of Greenfield. This is why customer data at a finer level is urgently needed.

SCorcoran said this is a meet and greet session. As for the map in the pamphlet, she would like to update the maps and noted that PRenaud did a map for the town in August and would like to have this group look at it for accuracy. She also would like to get more residents and businesses to do the quick speed test. As of now, 49 Greenfield residents have taken the test. She asked the EDAC to get the word out on the quick speed test. She also advised another way is to get the school kids to do a speed test.

AWood said the speed test indicates that you are getting service now, but there are many other issues that would invalidate the test. He noted if speed test comes back horrible, then it is horrible across the board. Over time is a better way to get data, than doing a spot test. AGarron responded that the purpose of the test is to acquire some data on broadband speeds throughout the state, as there was very little from customers prior to this program. Some data is certainly better than none.

SCorcoran said this meeting is to get to know each other and a way for the EDAC to learn of her role as a facilitator for this program. "Education and improvement of broadband within Greenfield is our main goal. Some will have more knowledge and others less and this committee is to try and get everyone on an even playing field."

She read to the members the outline for meetings with the Broadband working group. Meetings are tentatively to be held Feb – Oct. There are 6 meetings to be held, with 6 steps/topics to be addressed through these meetings.

PRenaud said that this sounds good. His original plan was to have a broadband subcommittee, with at least 2 EDAC members and other town folks to be involved. PRenaud said the EDAC members may have to get a subcommittee organized. He will schedule a talk with the Select Board before our next meeting to inform them in more detail of this program and the organization of any broadband steering committee.

AGarron asked if there were any other members on EDAC who are on other town committees. Yes, was the response. JFletcher and PRenaud are on the Planning Board. NNickerson is on the budget committee. He, AGarron, went over the steering committee responsibilities. It appears this town has a network that is good amongst the other committees in town. The Cooperative Extension does technical training. The broadband training module advises of terminology, and also there is the assessment tool that Greenfield responded to. This test was put together as "food for thought" in selecting towns to participate in the program. Greenfield has the basic organization for the broadband study.

AGarron asked to verify that there is no cable franchise agreement in the town. AWood responded we got missed, I don't know why or how this happened. PRenaud said "There is no coaxial cable at all in town. This puts Greenfield at a huge competitive disadvantage for attracting businesses when compared to the surrounding towns that have cable."

PRenaud said one big problem is that we have people who work from home, and they can access the internet through DSL or get a dedicated line for faster speeds and reliability to allow them to work from home, , but this is very expensive, up toward \$200 per month and more.

SCorcoran said could you pull in someone from CMRC, who is interested in getting broadband as well as business leaders, EDAC, and schools, their input for this study would be beneficial to the Town. The Connect Ed program that the President is promoting for internet is an avenue to look at. Also, FirstNet Public Safety might have funds available for this study.

AGarron said it appears the desire is there, but not necessarily the people. He was very impressed with Greenfield's completing the assessment and it enabled you, Greenfield, to get selected.

AWood asked "The organization part I see is very established but do you have knowledge of grants that we could apply for if we wanted to "grow" our own broadband service?" SCorcoran said, "Yes, we do. Carole Miller, Director of the State Broadband Program, is the person to contact and she will be at the next meeting. She has a list of grants, and has many contacts in the industry. She has experience in the industry prior to her getting this position at the state. Molly, Carole, Andre and I will be attending some or all of the meetings."

PRenaud said there are different standards on what exactly broadband is. FCC standards and state standards are not the same. He commented that on the town verification map, the minimum speeds for broadband were 768 kbps down and 200 kbps up, whereas the FCC has 4 Mbps down and 1 Mbps up as the minimum acceptable broadband speeds.

SCorcoran said the Universal Service Fund needs to be 'universal' in service and not just to certain areas. PRenaud commented that Greenfield's broadband problem is not unique to the town or the region, but is an increasingly major problem in rural areas across the entire country. AGarron agreed.

SCorcoran said we need to determine the next meeting date, who we are meeting with, and what progress you've achieved. Andre, Molly, and I are available for contacting and answering any questions you may have. PRenaud will contact them in a few weeks with this information.

PRenaud said when I did the town assessment, there were a couple questions that were only partly true for Greenfield; I found these difficult to answer. AGarron said to call him or Susan and offer feedback on how to add more questions for a clearer response for other towns in the future.

8:06 p.m. Conclusion of presentation

8:07 p.m. Other business:

PRenaud said he thought the state broadband director would be at only one meeting, but it appears CMiller will be attending more meetings, which is great. She seems to be the key person for getting any funding for the town. We need other people to be involved. How much time and interest do the EDAC members have for this project? PRenaud said he has a number of people in mind that might be interested and could possibly be on the subcommittee. He remarked that it is difficult for many people to volunteer with busy work and family lives, so there is no certainty that enough people for a viable subcommittee or steering committee would volunteer. If not, the EDAC may have to function in this capacity.

JFletcher was in agreement and having the potential subcommittee members attend an EDAC meeting, and from that meeting, form the broadband subcommittee. NNickerson said we need people much more in tune to broadband. PRenaud said we don't necessarily need everyone working on the broadband issue to be a tech expert.

PRenaud said, "If I can approach some people to be involved and say it's a 6 to 9 month gig, I feel that I could get a committee."

NNickerson said if we get to the part where grants can be written we will have to be involved longer as grant writing is very complicated. AWood also offered that grants have specific times that they need to be completed and submitted, and most of the grants are required to be written about 6 months earlier.

AWood said he will ask Mark Williams if he is interested in being on this subcommittee. NNickerson said he will ask Mark Kandalakus as well. JFletcher will ask Mike Redmond at CMRC as well to recommend someone there.

PRenaud said he is leaning toward having the next month's meeting with potential subcommittee people in attendance, if possible, as well as a discussion and hopefully, form a subcommittee that evening. It's also possible that this may not happen until April. Any broadband committee would continue on well beyond the duration of this program.

PRenaud and NNickerson said we have to have a plan of action, and then we can go forward with any grants that may be available. PRenaud commented an action plan is the final goal of our participation in the program. JFletcher said this is great for Greenfield as we have nothing now, and whatever we want to do will enhance our town. AWood asked what would be the "high" for

Greenfield. All agreed fiber optics to all in town. PRenaud said it is my goal is get any and all information that I can from the UNH people.

PRenaud said this committee agreed to serve for one year and that at next month's meeting, we all need to decide who will continue on the committee for up to another year. PRenaud also stated that elections for Chair and Vice Chair will happen at the March meeting.

PRenaud said RMarshall will be talking about charrette fundraising at next month's meeting. The amounts that need to be raised are \$5,000 for the charrette and \$1,000 for personnel expenses. PRenaud stated that the town could pursue a grant from the NH Charitable Foundation which would pay for the charrette portion. The Town of Milford was awarded a \$5,000 grant last year for this very purpose. They raised the other thousand by holding 2 community fundraising events. He will speak to RMarshall about this.

PRenaud said he has written two articles for a special edition of the Greenfield Spirit on RSA 79-E and the industrial rezoning with the broadband community initiative. He also advised that tomorrow he is attending a Civic Forum in Keene about the Strategic Economic Plan for New Hampshire, presented by the Business and Industry Association of New Hampshire; and another in Peterborough with local business leaders on balancing Economic Development in the Area vs. Maintaining Rural Character.

9:25 p.m. Adjournment

PRenaud motioned to adjourn. JFletcher seconded. Vote unanimous in favor.