

Economic Development Advisory Committee Minutes 10/20/2014

Economic Development Advisory Committee

Meeting Minutes/Broadband Info Meeting

Recorded by Sharon Rossi

October 20, 2014

Members Present: AWood, PRenaud, JFletcher, JMoran.

Others attending:

Sue Corcoran, Project Manager, NH Broadband Mapping & Planning Program

Henry Underwood, Southwest Region Planning Commission

Carol Miller, DRED, Director of Broadband Technology

7:00 p.m. Meeting Opened

A 19 page spreadsheet report was presented by PRenaud summarizing the survey on internet usage. 168 responses were received - 77 electronic, 92 paper responses. PRenaud may do a short summary for each spreadsheet page or an executive summary.

PRenaud said "Tonight will be ending one phase of the broadband effort. Shortly after tonight, the next phase begins – that of looking at all of our options, technically and financially, and starting to formulate a plan of action based on what the vision for the town is and what is realistically feasible.

A sampling of survey results:

- Resident or business owner - 96.4 % resident; 23.5% business owners
- How often used - 95.8% daily usage.
- Telecommuting - 58.8% people telecommute daily or occasionally; many comments expressed difficulty due to unreliable service.
- How do you currently use internet: email, shopping, streaming media, and education are the most prevalent; video calls, connecting parts of home to internet and streaming media were the most cited future usages that can't be done currently
- Satisfaction of current level of access - 54.5% dissatisfied or somewhat dissatisfied; 35.8% very or somewhat satisfied.
- Satisfaction with the current value of your service – 54.3% dissatisfied or somewhat dissatisfied; 30.9% very or somewhat satisfied.
- Both level and value questions had an average of 2.57 on a scale of 1-5, expressing relative dissatisfaction.
- How much are you paying? Varied amounts, most \$35-\$90 per month but 13% are paying more than \$100/mo for internet.
- Would you pay more monthly for better internet service or options? 70% willing to pay more for service; 26% no; 4% needed more information.
- Who bills you? 82.3% FairPoint
- How strong a factor would internet be in your decision making in buying, selling or renting a home? 78% say it is a very strong or strong factor. A realtor said she has had clients from NJ & CT looking to

relocate here, but sales fall through due to limited internet. Nobody from an urban area wants move here unless there is high speed internet available.

- How would you describe the community today? 80.1% said bedroom community
- How would you like community described in the future? - 65.8% would like to see a community seeking small business expansion.

Some demographic results:

- 79% were age 40 and above; 21% below age 40
- Split down the middle by gender – 50.9% male, 49.1% female
- 29.5% of respondents lived in a household with at least 1 person attending the public school system

SCorcoran said it looks like most of those that responded to the survey have been here for a long time.

90.9% own their homes. 100 respondents gave their addresses on the survey, which shows a distribution of responses from all areas of town. The response rate can be estimated at 17% - 20% of households in town, which is very good.

Great work commented SCorcoran and HUnderwood. Next step is that PRenaud will do his executive summary on the survey. The full survey results with all comments will then be distributed to all those present and will be posted on the town website. PRenaud hopes to get this done by the end of next week. The survey results provide evidence of broad support for securing better broadband. It should also help in getting funding for broadband expansion projects as they clearly indicate substandard service in the town.

CMiller said there is still some way of having changes in broadband which should be written in the Master Plan. Setting goals or objectives by this committee is needed. SCorcoran said to think of how you go about enacting a solution to improve broadband in town.

SCorcoran said the comment from the realtor is vital. Selling homes of the elderly who will need to downsize will be a major point to make broadband available to the town. SCorcoran said the town leadership has to embrace the fact that it could be risky or costly, but it will add value to the options the town can offer to residents and businesses.

PRenaud and AWood had a conference call with Comcast a few weeks ago and the cost of surveying the town would be \$32,000, not \$4,000 as previously stated, with the town having to cover about half the cost. So funding is needed just to go that route. PRenaud and AWood, along with JHunter, last week met with Carole Monroe, Director of NH FastRoads, and Brian Foucher of WiValley, to discuss broadband options for the town. Design Nine, who works with NH FastRoads, would do a survey for a fiber network for about \$15,000. PRenaud stated that he has not received the requested model wireless overlay district ordinance from BFoucher yet. CMiller said she would contact him to have it sent. At that meeting, it was suggested the town look into installing conduits to bypass the cost and delays associated with doing a build out on utility poles.

SCorcoran said the Community Block Grant program of the CDFA would be happy to manage the survey, but a funding mechanism is needed because they would do water and utility funding first. State lost \$15 million on tax revenue on internet because we declared our state "internet tax free." USDA Rural Utilities has a fund for telecom loan program that the town should apply for.

A cooperative in town could apply if the town wasn't interested in applying. A non-profit organization would also be a way to pursue a broadband loan option.

CMiller asked "What is the next step for this group?" SCorcoran said all the info received from the various companies should be put in a report to present to the Select Board. CMiller will be sending out a feasibility matrix with the goals and steps listed. This report will be needed to go for loans, grants, etc.

You need to develop the vision, set the goals, and measure where you are in these steps to keep the momentum going.

Using several other options, one would be get fiber through the center of town, and then have access points in different locations on the fiber in town. If we go this route, we need to make sure that our regulations are compliant with what the federal government allows. PRenaud stated that the nearest fiber to town now is at the junction of Rtes. 101 and 202 in Peterborough. This is about 7.75 miles from the center of town. 186 Communications' network also has access at the junction of Rtes. 101 and 31 near downtown Wilton. That is about 9.25 miles away.

Steps to be taken:

- Summarize report

- Set goals

- Expand committee with local IT personnel from various companies in town.

- Understanding regulatory hurdles

- Determine cost of build out

- Explore options and loans, grants, bonding - (construction budget, etc)

PRenaud asked if a survey could be done with the different options of broadband. There may be a different solution for different parts of town. Also could the survey be broken down into sections of the town to determine how much it will cost per section?

SCorcoran said there is a workshop in Concord on November 19. Bethlehem, Moultonborough, and Greenfield will have speakers on the panel. The workshop is to advise officials how to go about getting better broadband in their communities. There will be legal people, ISP advisors, community representatives, and the UNH committee. PRenaud will be the panelist from Greenfield.

CMiller will start populating the feasibility matrix and will get it to PRenaud.

This will allow you to put an owner to and accountability to various goals on the feasibility study. PRenaud and CMiller will work together on this after all meetings with broadband companies have occurred.

Leadership in town has to find 'seed' money in order to help get broadband in town.

CMiller will contact BFoucher about the regulatory issues. PRenaud will contact Ingo Roemer to set up a conference call or meeting with 186

Communications. They are the builder of the NH FastRoads network, and owner of a substantial fiber network in NH and parts of MA.

CMiller said you've done the longest and hardest part in gathering the info via the survey. With the mapping, that will help with location of putting the fiber in. PRenaud said we need to find funding for the physical survey first.

HUnderwood is going to do research on conduits and report back to the committee. LMurphy has started work on the Economic Development chapter and this is a good time to put some of the broadband info into the chapter.

PRenaud said next month we will be talking about the economic development chapter of the Master Plan.

CMiller will e-mail PRenaud with dates for a conference call with 186 Communications. SCorcoran thanked the committee for all the work they have done on the broadband project.

8:40 pm Charrette Results and Recommendations

John Hopkins arrived at 8:50 pm.

PRenaud went over the charrette results:

- Extending sidewalks in the village. A speed table with crosswalks to be done at the Sawmill Rd. – Forest Rd. junction. The Rymes gas pumps license is up for renewal at the end of next year and the plan is to take them out and put in an access road and sidewalk to the park area. Meadow Park would be established on the site of the community leach field.
 - Landscaping would be done to develop the streetscape in the core of the village and at gateways.
 - Businesses that could be built in town include a coffee shop, bike shop, farm/local products store. A neighborhood kitchen is another idea that PRenaud heard at the community supper. The charrette team sees limited commercial potential for the village.
 - There is already ample parking in the town center. Formalize parking at the Town Office, Meeting House and park.
 - Move the Police station to the Fire Station to make a Public Safety Building/Complex.
 - An elevator to be added to the back of the Meetinghouse to make it ADA compliant. This will be very expensive. The bottom floor of the Meetinghouse will have to be completely rehabbed. Rest rooms need to be brought up to code.
 - They recommended expanding the Inn building to have parking in the back. A set of cottages with a common area to be built and tied into the public septic. These would be behind the inn, nearer to Slip Rd. though accessed from Forest Rd.
 - Solar panel array area behind the store to be owned by the town.
 - Schoolhouse trail to be cleaned up and used more frequently.
 - Trails to be marked for bikes, horses, snowmobiles. Some sections of the trails have 'hand shake' agreements, so the agreements would have to be renewed and formalized. Also private property would have to get some type of agreement so that the public can use the trail.
 - Infill of vacant and underutilized buildings in village center area.
- The charrette team recommended making zoning requirements less restrictive in the village.

PRenaud stated that an idea heard at the charrette would be to offer a lower tax incentive to property owners if they would sign a written agreement to use their land for a trail. Perhaps an easement could be agreed upon. JHopkins said we have enough Class A trails in Greenfield to promote the trails. He also suggested the town develop some of the town owned property for recreational purposes.

The committee asked PRenaud if the charrette tour went to Norah's Depot or the church lot for sale on Francestown Rd. PRenaud said "Neither. The bus tour started late and they were behind schedule. We only toured the immediate town center area on foot." The committee stated this was an unfortunate oversight for the charrette. PRenaud agreed.

PRenaud would like to see the inside of Norah's Depot. JMoran said that the inside is serviceable on the left side of the building; the right side would need some investing. The upstairs is patchy. It is at this time broken up, but if it's to be used as an apartment/rental about \$250,000 would be needed to bring it up to code.

PRenaud asked JHopkins about the status of the NH100 bike rally. Is it possibly going to be kept in Greenfield? JHopkins said that it has been presented to the Ride Marshal and she will make the decision by the end of November. He feels confident that it will remain here.

JHopkins said "Town owned land should be developed for trails and the GTA would maintain the trails. There are several locations where this could happen.

Because this was a suggestion by the charrette committee, trails could be a benefit to the town."

Budget: Our budget is \$2,000 and it looks like we will use less than half of it this year. If a tradeshow is done next year, do we want to stay with this amount or lessen it? Board agreed to keep it at the \$2000 line.

On **RSA 79-E**, we have to do an application packet. The town will begin to promote the tax incentive. Should we do this next month, go through some samples and iron out the application or hand this to APatt, where I could work with him on this. The committee decided to go through it at the November meeting. PRenaud will let APatt know that we are doing the application. PRenaud will then present the application package to APatt and the Select Board.

JFletcher is changing from a regular member to an alternate for the committee.

PRenaud asked members if they have anyone in mind for new members for the committee, please let him know. He will work on getting a few new members. We will also have to decide how to proceed organizationally in light of the dichotomy between broadband and non-broadband issues.

Last month's meeting minutes: JMoran motioned to accept. JFletcher seconded. Vote unanimous in favor.

9:35 p.m. Adjournment motioned by JFletcher and AWood seconded.

