

## Winchester Broadband Committee 3/4/2021 Minutes

**Members Present:** Natalie Quevedo, Leonard Picard, Jennifer Howe, Nichole Pelkey

Jennifer Howe opened the meeting at 5:00 PM

### **Minutes:**

Todd Horner from Southwest Regional Planning Board joined the meeting. Jennifer provided a background of committee's progress.

Todd asked if we have attended meetings of Monadnock Broadband group? Jenn has attended one in February and Natalie has attended two prior to that.

Todd provided an overview of SWRP as well as link to Monadnock Broadband group.

<http://www.swrpc.org/files/Monadnock%20Broadband%20Implementation%20Guide%202020-10-12.pdf>

Planning commission is reaching out to towns to see what needs are and provides assistance to committees. His goal for this meeting are to get a sense of what this committee's needs are how the planning committee may be able to help.

Todd advised he is reaching out to other towns in the region as well. Swanzey and Richmond are earlier in the process compared to Winchester.

Jenn asked if partnering with these bordering towns would be beneficial to all of us? Todd advised there is territory to explore, but it is unknown territory. Some towns are gravitating towards following the Chesterfield because it is a model with demonstrated results. There could be advantages to collaborating with other towns but depends on the priorities of the committees. Is it to connect as soon as possible? Or is service more affordable under different model? Is there willingness to take a slower, more deliberate approach and look at all options? There could be possibility of federal assistance in the future.

Natalie is interested in the collaboration, not sure how it works. We are not that far in the process. How are the other towns progressing?

Todd advised Richmond does not have an established committee yet. He reached out to the town admin who reached out to their select board. They have not issued a request for information yet.

Swanzey released request for information last year. They don't have a broadband committee. They have full time planning and economic director and it is a staff-driven effort. They are at a similar place in the process as Winchester.

A discussion within the next few months with other towns would give this committee time to pursue the Chesterfield approach of collaboration model.

Natalie feels forming a neighborly connection is good – multiple towns on the same request may be helpful. Select boards and residents might be more likely to approve bonds if we have grant money and more communities supporting.

Natalie asked how SWRP can help us with this? Todd advised they can facilitate a meeting between the three towns. Hinsdale is also pursuing broadband and might be interested in technical assistance on the topic.

Natalie also asked if it is worth reaching out to the utility to ask what it looks like if we have XX number of customers to get their perspective on multi-town implementation.

Jenn mentioned we are early enough in the process that even if we don't utilize a multi-town approach we are not losing any ground by exploring as we are not able to vote on the process until next year. More information and options to show the town may be helpful.

Todd advised potential next steps could be reaching out to other municipalities to see if they are interested and a second step may be to reach out to Consolidated. Most towns are working with Consolidated.

SWRP is also submitting a proposal to USDA for a grant to commit staff time. Asking communities if they are willing to provide a letter of support. If the committee is willing send a letter to show community buy in it will help the case with USDA. Natalie asked if there is financial obligation if we provide letter – there is not.

Todd will be in touch with the committee regarding a multi-town meeting. He is not sure of the timing – perhaps within the next month or two.

Todd left the meeting and regular business was resumed.

#### **Old Business:**

Meeting Cadence – agreed to keep the twice monthly meeting at this time.

Natalie reached out to John Parker – he has not responded. Natalie asked him to reach out to Karey to let her know he is no longer on the committee. She has also asked him for minutes. Natalie will look for the recording of the 12/8/20 meeting and create minutes.

Jenn reached out to Karey because she did not see the meeting on the calendar. It is posed under the Broadband Committee page – Jenn will ask her to also post on the calendar on the home page.

Minutes from 2/15/2021 approved by Jenn & seconded by Leonard.

#### **New Business:**

Jenn will send an email to the Broadband Committee asking if changing start time to 7:00 pm works for the group. Jennifer, Leonard, Natalie and Nichole can meet at 7.

Meeting adjourned at 5:39 pm.