Broadband Implementation Committee

Public Meeting #1 of 2

10am Municipal Office Complex

Tom Sevigney introduces Entry Point Representative Devin Cox

Devin presents PowerPoint

Devin mopeds the presentation with a description of what Essential infrastructure is considered. Each home built requires water, sewer and electricity, in our case septic and water are not provided by the town but they are essential to being able to live in a home. So this poses a question as to how important internet access is to any home in this day and age. Is the internet considered an essential service? In most communities the answer is a resounding yes.

Questions Posed by the Audience: Questions are paraphrase where needed for brevity

Q: My houser has an underground cable line. Will the fiber cable be underground as well?

A: This is yet to be determined when the official mapping is done by the town. Essentially the plan is that all services will be run the same way. If you have underground conduit or other underground utilities, or utilities that run to your home from a pole, the fiber service will be run the same way. This will be formally evaluated and determined at a later date.

Q: If Fiber runs to my house, will I have to run fiber cables all through my house for this service?

A: No, once the fiber line is run to the house it will connect to a nib which converts it to run it over the hard wire RJ45 through the modem or router to the network cable you already have throughout the house or the options for wireless technology connectivity have increased so much you won't necessarily need to wire the house.

Q: Is the connection for fiber just like the connection for cable?

A: No but yes. It is the same type of connection from the road to the house, it joins a nid and with the new box for the fiber service it performs the same job.

Same question posed a lot of discussion about coax cable with bips, I get 1.2 mb down over coax and 42 up, answer is ethernet is not coax, this went back and forth including a reiteration of RJ45 plug. There is no connectivity between the Comcast cable and a fiber line.

Q: I paid to have Comcast run the line from the pole to my house. My street had no service before I ran that line. What is to stop them (Comcast) from tapping into my line?

A: This answer is complex. Firstly, you may have paid to run that line but Comcast will tell you it's their line. Secondly, coax cable is not fiber, they are not compatible, it is different technology.

Devin explains that “sadly the reality is that 80% of communications infrastructure in East Haddam, run by Comcast or Frontier is paid for by the tax payers and that money earned goes from the road back to Comcast or Frontier headquarters.”

Tom followed with information saying there will be no town tax or bonding. A nonprofit will be established which will apply for the loan to lay the infrastructure and after that is paid back the prices will go down.

Devin followed to reinforce the fact that this is an opt-in plan our town is considering. There is no obligation. The town needs a certain percentage (60%) of homes to make this a viable opportunity.

The following questions were sent in this morning and forwarded to Devin by Tom.

Q: What other municipal networks are in CT?

A: There is the CT Education Network, but there are no other towns or cities that Devin is aware of. He followed with a history of CT communications legislation. The cable association for years and maybe even decades has lobbied for policy to prohibit communications infrastructure on power poles up to 2019. In 2019 the state legislature sued and the supreme court reversed the decision. Since 2019, EntryPoint has done 7 feasibility studies, and he is sure other companies have done some too.

Q: What makes a municipally owned program more robust than other fiber services like Comcast? For example National disaster, storm recovery, etc.

A: A lot has not been finalized but the town is not performing construction or maintenance. This will be contracted out, just like it is with Comcast or any other install. The trucks may say whatever corporation like Comcast or whatever, but these are 3rd party subcontractors and are managed through contracts for service.

Q: Why do we need a 3rd fiber provider?

A: This goes back to the initial conversation-its a matter of monopoly deciding what you get, how much it costs and whether they feel that doing upkeep service is in their best interest. Private versus municipal ownership. From 1995 to about 2007 there was a tremendous consolidation slide. Comcast and Cox bought a lot of the smaller cable services. Comcast gets about $121billion a year, Cox is at around $12billion per year, Charter and Time Warner also did this, then Charter bought Time Warner and created the biggest monopoly yet. This left us with 3 giant companies. Now experts say Fiber will replace Cable, Fiber is able to do more and will make Cable obsolete. Then AT&T partnered with Blackrock to build the biggest Fiber network. They are actively installing to provide whole communities with service. However this will come at a cost. Fewer agencies mean less competition which keep the prices high. They have nothing to lose.

Q: Is the Committee (Broadband Implementation Committee) familiar with the Affordable Connectivity Program?

A: During the Covid-19 pandemic the US Government provided money for low income families to access internet services. In general this opportunity will continue through at least one ISP (Internet Service Provider) for families that qualify. If a family has students in public school that qualify for free/reduced meals, they will also qualify to partake in the Affordable Connectivity Package offered by an ISP.

Q: Generally speaking attracting businesses to East Haddam is challenging, perhaps we need to change zoning or something.

A: Devin can not speak to zoning issues, but in general having affordable, high speed, reliable internet will attract and retain business. Major companies like Comcast have a household rate and a business rate. Usually the business rate is 3x higher than the household rate. Especially because the idea that a company uses more bandwidth than a home is considered the reason. However a home streaming Netflix will use way more bandwidth than a business would. Why do they charge a business more then? Because they can get away with it. They offer allegedly more service options and other incentives and then up the price. But owning our own municipal broadband service would be an attractive incentive for businesses to consider East Haddam.

Q: What plans does this opportunity offer us? Comcast can offer cable tv, phone and internet.

A: Today Cable tv, internet and phone bundle can cost $252 per month. With the example Devin gave of having a separate cell phone plan, and only having Google Fiber (Wifi) and streaming HULU, he pays $70/month for Google and $60/month for HULU he's down to $110/month.

Q: But who do we call for service?

A: Google or HULU, with the municipal broadband plan there are contacts on each of the ISP providers just like with Google and HULU. The benefit is that innovation opens opportunity for competition which drives pricing down.

Q: Bristol, CT looked into municipal broadband then decided to turn it down. Why was that?

A: EntryPoint did the feasibility study for Bristol in 2019-2021. Covid slowed the process down. But there was an election in 2021 and the mayor of Bristol lost that election. The driving force behind the interest in municipal broadband, who initiated the feasibility study was replaced by a newly elected mayor who was not in favor of the plan. Bristol's feasibility study showed they would greatly benefit from having a municipally owned network but alas, that is not in the cards for now.

Q: The Supreme Court overturned the restrictions to using the poles, what is to stop them from turning back that verdict? Will we have to take everything down if they do that?

A: The Cable and Telephone lobby is very powerful, they would rather pay $100s of millions to tell us that municipal fiber is a bad thing rather than spend that amount or even less to improve their systems and services. But the only thing challenging them is Fiber. Fiber is the newest and greatest option going forward. This opportunity of taking charge of our future to control pricing will save us from their monopoly.

Irene Haines spoke about regulating the market. The market will push for greater accessibility for the consumer to get the ever increasing products and services into the hands of the consumer. They need the highway to get these to us. We build our own highway, over the state building the highway, we control the open opportunity to access these ever increasing services. Cable is becoming obsolete. More companies are showing up to do the installs, the maintenance, it's a brand new market. It's a free market.

Q: Where does the internet come from?

A: The powerful thing about East Haddam building this network is that the ISPs don't have to be local agencies. They can come from anywhere. It is an open network which provides competition keeping pricing low.

Q: Is the price inclusive of everything?

A: Yes. The price includes the ISP, maintenance and paying for the infrastructure. Once the infrastructure is paid off the price gets lower.

Q: How long will it take to pay off the infrastructure?

A: That depends on a lot of factors. With long-term financing the costs may be lower and paid off over a long time and we won't know the term or how many people we get to sign up which will also affect the costs.