Broadband Implementation Committee

August 8, 2024, 1pm, Zoom

Attendees

Tom Sevigney, Craig Mansfield, Stan Conover, Irene Haines, Linda Ziemienieski

Entry Point: Nicole Cozzo

Meeting called to order at 1:02pm

July 26, 2024 Minutes approved, Motion made Stan, 2nd Irene

Discussion of account balance and balance due to Entry Point for Grant assistance.

> Linda says there is $2414.59 left in the account. Tom and Nicole (EP) discussed a partial payment and agreed. Craig suggested $1200 to EP and keeping the remaining balance for another mass mailing moving forward, and to avoid the need to go to the Selectmen for more money. Motion made by Stan EP to send a bill for $1200.

Next Steps

> EP met with the USDA to discuss funding. Nicole does not have a report for us at this point. She expects to meet and discuss the results with Jeff Christiansen to review and will have information to us next week. She feels the USDA support has changed and that the new reps are more helpful and especially more knowledgeable. She will also update us at the next meeting.
>
> Tom says we have about 1750 people signed up as Interested and that our focus going forward is funding and finding the lowest price. There is continued discussion about the FED lowering interest rates in the fall and that we are continuing to look for options for now new plans B and C. Plan A was the state grant which we failed. We failed because the grant was specifically directed at ISPs. Municipalities were not expected to apply. Many municipalities are now facing the same problems and processes we are nationally.
>
> > Other options over USDA funding
> >
> > > Eric and Nicole from EP are going to listen to the state phone meeting 8/18/2024 for other suggestions. It has been noted that there is a diversity grant available.
> > >
> > > > EP feels East Haddam is not a candidate for this as we are too spread out and it is looking at density.
> > >
> > > Private funding potential
> > >
> > > Combo style choices like bond plus private or bond and USDA

Craig makes a very good point in that if we go private we lose the option of municipal use of telephone poles and that increases the price.

EP informs us that they are considering creating a second company to offer private financing to build out systems in communities. This would NOT be MUNICIPALLY OWNED. This is not set yet and is seen and stated as such, to BE A LAST RESORT.

Funding exploration discussion

Since the grant we applied for was targeted toward ISPs and not municipalities, what we saw in the rejection process was that our status in the build out/design phase was too preliminary. We have a feasibility study which included a lot of preliminary design aspects but nothing concrete enough to support the grant application questions. We need to move forward with RFPs. Irene mentioned that in her experience looking for grants for town issues, that Shovel Ready reporting makes for greater access to available funding, moving away from hypothetical to concrete design plans. This too brings us closer to concrete numbers in terms of money needed. With the grant we were able to estimate close to $75/month for service, maintenance, and hardware. Now we need to shoot for this same number or lower to continue to be competitive.

Discussion of RFP process

Tom asked what is involved and if there are templates for RFPs? Nicole from EP says templates are available, they will send us some, Craig asks as well to align with the town process of RFP. EP has relationships with companies that do design and construction, but we can also look into our local agencies to see who may have the best deal for us. We will include our preliminary schematics. We know equipment costs from EP, the engineering and construction costs are what will help us solidify overall costs to the consumer.

Continuing to keep the public in the loop and promotion of the service as a community asset discussion

Craig asked what we can do to keep the narrative moving forward with the wait we now have while looking for funding. We want a narrative to continue to engage with the community. Does EP have reports and studies to show the success models of communities that did their own build outs? We want an Apples to Apples narrative, not a city comparison. Nicole, Jeff, Eric and Devin at EP have these narratives and will forward them to Tom and Tom will write another newspaper article to keep the community informed. EP will also update the website, Tom will email all the “Interested” people to bring them up to speed with the failure of the grant application.

Next Meeting August 23, 2024, 1pm Zoom

Meeting adjourned at 1:26pm