

Broadband Implementation Committee

August 23, 2024, 1pm, Zoom

Attendees

Tom Sevigney, Craig Mansfield, Stan Conover, Bruce Harris

Entry Point Nicole Cozzo, Jeff Christiansen

Meeting called to order at 1:04pm

August 9, 2024 Minutes approved, Motion made Stan, 2nd Bruce

Website Domain Renewal

The website is due for renewal costing \$260.51. We have \$1214.59 left in the budget. Craig motioned to approve this expense, Stan 2nd. Nicole (EP) will send an invoice next month.

USDA/RFP discussion

Nicole and Jeff (EP) discussed the current model working with Westport, MA who is using the USDA to fund their project. The USDA is specifically interested in investing in emergency notification networks. They were responsible for installing the emergency 911 services over the phone lines. A big selling point for us to exploit with the USDA is the emergency service network in town. Jeff tells us that we could use the revenue from the project as collateral towards the loan with the USDA. The USDA moves slower than town government. They can be used to fund directly from the USDA or Jeff recommends using one of the lenders the USDA works with, as the USDA backstops debt of lenders and Jeff says working with one of the lenders is easier than working directly with the USDA. He stresses a big selling point will be that we are also using this install to improve public safety and community internet. Jeff would like to combine the applications for Westport MA and East Haddam to hopefully expedite the approval process. He is looking into this and hopefully will have an answer for us at the next meeting. Nicole stressed that our historic power outage lasting 11 days will trigger the public safety aspect of the USDA. Craig stressed that if a Category 3 storm came up the coast we could lose power for 30-45 days. Also, he said that having this as a backup to the public safety radio system and Everbridge is crucial. The USDA looks strongly at this type of concern. Jeff says a strong, articulate statement for public safety will go a long way. Craig stated that we will need a Federal politician to work with us like Senator Murphy or someone. Craig also stated that the USDA likes shovel ready projects as well so we need to get going on the RFPs. Jeff stressed that we need to let the USDA guide us. Let them tell us what they want. There are certain types of RFPs that can help with this process as well. Bruce Patterson(Director of Operations) from Entry Point, is especially skilled in this area and will join us on the next meeting call. Craig wants to start the RFP writing process ASAP so when the

USDA says GO we are ready. Jeff stressed writing a “goal setting RFP” meaning these are the goals we wish to achieve. Jeff suggests letting the USDA tell you what they are looking for. Craig understands all of this and used the term “design build” as an example. Nicole has a checklist from the USDA she will share with us. No one knows of any other grants available. The grant we applied for this year will be available again next year maybe but we will still not be an ISP, so unless they fix the application we will fail again. Jeff stated that each state is handling this grant process differently. NY is user friendly, making it easier for municipalities to get these grants, versus monopoly companies like Verizon, which in MA garnered most of the grant money. He isn't sure how CT works, but given that the grant application was designed to work best for ISP applicants, he feels that could have been handled better or differently. Nicole discussed the CT State phone meeting she attended and discovered it was not for the municipal grant explanations but rather was focused on Digital Equity-so feels that schools and libraries should really look into getting their arguments in. She forwarded that information to Irene.

Next steps

Nicole will invite Bruce Patterson to our next meeting to discuss the goal setting RFP process.

Bonding can not happen as we are over extended in the town project arena.

Tom will be sending an email to the people signed up as interested with a status update, missing out on the grant, partnering with the USDA. Tom will send the update email to Nicole so she can update the website. Tom will ask in the email whether there are any members of community groups interested in having the committee come to speak with them about this process that may not have had us speak to them yet. Earlier he spoke to the Lake Hayward community association. There are over 400 members in that association but just over 100 non-seasonal members. Craig stressed that the seasonal members often opt to leave the internet on to run the security cameras and other things so they should be considered as important contributions to this goal.

Big signs need to come down, they are starting to look shabby and a resident asked to have the sign removed from their property. Tom will be back after Labor Day and will go out with Pete Govert and whomever else is available to get the big signs down.

The FEDS are lowering interest rates next month, so getting lower interest loans will be easier.

Jeff will keep working on the USDA issues and get back to us about the considered joint application with Westport MA.

Next Meeting September 6, 2024, 1pm Zoom

Meeting adjourned at 1:27pm