Broadband Implementation Committee

September 20, 2024, 1pm, Zoom

Attendees

Tom Sevigney, Craig Mansfield, Stan Conover, Laurel White, Irene Haines

Guest Peter Schultz-fiber optics networks developer/designer

Entry Point Nicole Cozzo

Meeting called to order at 1:06pm

September 6, 2024 Minutes approved, Motion made Stan, 2nd Irene

Discussion with guest Peter Schultz regarding options of alternative approaches to municipal fiber optics network. Peter installed a municipal fiber network in the US Virgin Islands which connected the three US islands to Miami and New York. He has 52 years of Fiber Optics experience and is up to date with current operating systems. Peter, Tom and Entry Point have had conversations regarding using his experience in this arena with our plans.

Nicole (EP) has no further information regarding the USDA loan process, Jeff Christiansen has still not met with the USDA representatives to discuss our plans and a possible merger of applications with Westport, MA. She is going to ask Jeff to introduce her to the representative working from one of the financial institutions that handle the loan processing.

> During this discussion we were informed of several pending projects Entry Point has going that are at the point of breaking ground or getting on line. These include Marin County, CA, South Carolina, Quincy, MA and Minnisota. Marin County is similar to us in that they are very spread out-like East Haddam, a not very dense population compared to land mass. Craig asked specifically if there was a project that shared similarities to our lack of density and vast land areas between homes with regards to costs associated with maintenance and such.

State Grants

> DEEP released information for the next round of grant application training sessions. Municipal applicants are meeting virtually September 25. Tom and Laurel discussed the email and the frustrations about the applications being geared to ISP providers all along in the previous round. The group still feels strongly that we proceed with researching the USDA opportunities and still follow the DEEP grant process with the hope of getting an opportunity to let the state know we are aware that the previous round was not clear in its consideration of municipalities versus ISP providers installing these networks. The email

from DEEP was forwarded to the full committee after this discussion. All are welcome to register for the webinar.

Irene was asked to find out what she can at the state level regarding the ability to appeal to the state about the trouble with the application appropriateness.

Further discussion regarding the shovel ready plans that seem to be a part of successful application acceptance. A low level engineering plan may cost several $100-thousand. An estimate of $150,000 was put on the table as an example.

Peter Schultz brought up Private Equity partnerships. Peter knows of one in New York and EP knows of several that they have worked with. The difference between using the USDA loan process or low interest loans in conjunction with a grant versus the use of a Private Equity partnership is that the town would not ultimately own the network and that would prevent the use of the telephone poles for free as a municipality. A Private Equity partnership would prevent East Haddam from state approved municipal pole use allowances.

It was suggested that there could be a work around solution to a Private Equity firm being a partner to the town and the town being listed as the owner but that is something that needs further exploration to confirm it is possible.

Private Equity also looks for density, which we discussed earlier. We are not considered a dense community because of low population compared to land mass.

Private Equity also looks to liquidate the inventory after 10-15 years approximately. They could sell to whomever. This would need to be seriously considered as well as carefully managed in a contract.

Next Meeting October 4, 2024, 1pm Zoom

Meeting adjourned at 2:06pm