Broadband Implementation Committee

November 1, 2024, 1pm, Zoom

Attendees

Tom Sevigny, Craig Mansfield, Stu Palmert, Stan Conover, Irene Haines, Linda Ziemienieski,

Entry Point: Nicole Cozzo

Called to order 1:03

October 18, 2024 minutes approved, motion made Stan, 2nd Stu

USDA loan update

Karen Johnson will be our liaison to the USDA. She feels optimistic about the loan being approved but will take time to receive as we navigate the bureaucracy that is the process of the USDA. Nicole sent a request to Irene for a town financial statement. Irene says Linda is working on it. Nicole asked Craig if he received the request for the name of the accounting firm the town used for the Municipal Office Complex project feasibility study. He has and the name is Bill Lindsay, an independent agent. Linda will send the contact information to Nicole. Nicole feels using resources already familiar with our town projects will be an asset. This is not the feasibility study itself but an accounting of.

Irene expressed concern about the many other bonding projects the town has in play already as a risk to this next USDA loan approval. Bill Lindsay is also involved with these other projects. Nicole reassured the committee that this USDA loan is a shorter term risk as in, the subscribers to the installed network will be paying the loan, not the town. Once the network is built, it will become the collateral to the loan, not the town. This is built into the monthly fee. Craig reinforced the aspect of the town being the backer of the loan initially, but after the network is built, the subscribers pay off the balance. And Nicole reinforced the idea that if it comes to an untenable situation the network can be sold, so it is an asset to the town.

Next steps

Nicole has a meeting within the next 2-3 weeks with the USDA for an overview of Entry Point's technology and software. Benjamin Waldow is the Southern New England Rural Development agent for MA, CT and RI for the USDA. Entry Point is putting a team together to review the technology. She feels confident that this will be successful as the USDA jokes to fund these types of projects.

State Grants

Tom, Jeff Christiansen, Nicole and ErikBanyai had a 35 minute call with the Director of the DEEP Broadband department, Kevin Pisacich, on Wednesday October 30, 2024. There is absolutely no allowance for the application to be approved without the low level engineering study completed. This is federally directed. Other states like CA and NY set up a secondary grant process for municipalities within the larger federal opportunities but many other states, including CT, did not do this and this leaves municipalities vying for the same grant money as the incumbent monopolies, like Frontier. According to Tom, his interpretation of the call was that DEEP does not see East Haddam as underserved because Frontier has been installing cable lines. The 2nd round of grants has started. There is $12.8 million available. This is a rolling application period and the approvals will disperse money until it runs out. Tom asked the DEEP director if we can just ask for the amount of money needed to do the low level engineering study and was told most likely no. It is a part of the successful application process. Nicole's construction partner estimates that it will cost about $2.20 per foot for underground installation and $0.80 per foot for ariel. She asked Craig to review the BARI. Craig does not have access to this file and can check with Jim Ventres the town's Zoning Officer. Nicole will have Erik send the file to Craig to review. Craig feels confident that the town has less than 20% underground service.

Tom suggests the committee go forward with submitting for the 2nd round of grants. The requirements ask for Letter of Partnership from Entry Point and Quanta, a 25% town match and the low level engineering design.

Community Outreach

Election day tabling. Tom, Laurel, Craig and Stu are available at this point to cover some of the day. There is expected to be a lesser turnout as many people have already voted. Project Safe Halloween had an enormous turnout and may be an opportunity to reach more subscribers next year.

So far there are 1815 people signed up as interested.

Tom will write an article for the town newspaper giving an update of where the project stands.

Stu asked if Peter Schultz would write something for the paper. Tom thought he may team up with Peter to do an article.

Broadband Implementation Committee Vacancy

Pete Govert has applied to be on the committee. Motion made by Craig to accept, 2nd Stan. Linda will bring this to the next BOS meeting November 16, 2024.

Next Meeting November 15, 2024, 1pm Zoom

Meeting adjourned at 1:28pm