

Broadband Committee, Town of Mason, NH

Meeting 2/3/2020

Approved Minutes

Present: Broadband Committee members Bill Schongar, Lee Lemoine, Joe Havens, Mike Judge

Called to Order: The meeting was called to order at 6:00 PM by Bill Schongar

New Business:

- The purpose and mission of the Mason Broadband committee was identified with the goal to improve internet connectivity in Mason
- Each member of the committee introduced themselves
- The status of the NDA with Consolidated was brought up and the need to check on it
- Consolidated DSL updates were discussed. Poles were installed in the north end of town
- The Westmoreland Public Bond Hearing was discussed as a means for Mason Broadband members to listen in and hear discussion points. A follow up will occur to identify the timing
- Senate Bill 170 was mentioned as a means to improve Broadband infrastructure by issuing a bond
- Certain elements of the bill were discussed, most notably the need to identify Mason as an “unserved” area as defined by the FCC’s Broadband definition of 25Mbps download speed, 3Mbps upload speed.

Open Discussion:

- A question was asked by a resident: How would the Broadband connectivity work for individuals who didn’t want to pay for Broadband and if they would still be able to still get the DSL connection? The answer is not known.
- A question was asked by a resident: Regarding the connectivity speeds needed to determine an “unserved” area, what if there’s a difference between what Consolidated determines is the household’s speed versus the actual speed? The answer is not known.
- A question was asked by a resident: What other boxes in town will be upgraded with the existing infrastructure (i.e. Withee Brook Road area). The answer is not known.
- A question was asked by a resident: Is there any idea on cost for the fiber/broadband bond? The answer is not known
- A question was asked by a resident: What if residents want to complete the survey but don’t have internet? It was discussed that alternative considerations for gathering information was being considered.
- A question was asked by a resident: Who maintains the lines once they are installed and there’s an issue? It was discussed that other towns wrote it into their contract/agreement with the ISP that if they service the community they are responsible for maintenance of the lines should an issue arise (like a downed tree).
- A question was asked by a resident: Is there fiber already in town? The answer was that there is but it is only being run for specific purposes (i.e. to the school). There is not the option to use that for current residential use.

- A question was asked by a resident: Does the internet speed constantly fluctuate? It was discussed that it does depending on time of day or other considerations.
- A question was asked by a resident: Is Consolidated addressing the Verizon/Fairpoint issues that it inherited? It was discussed that Consolidated has made some improvements in town since it took over.
- A question was asked by a resident: Does the cost of the bond include the fiber run down private driveways? It was discussed that other towns that issued bonds were initially told during installation that the first ~100 feet or so of installation on a private driveway was covered by the cost of the bond but that additional feet had a cost per foot for materials and installation. However, in discussion with one of the towns (Chesterfield), the installer decided that keeping track of the additional footage was too cumbersome and installed the extra fiber without additional cost.
- A question was asked by a resident: Are there wireless options available instead of fiber? It was discussed that yes, there were. A broadband committee member had the contact info of a T-Mobile rep who can speak to 5G coverage. It was stated that the broadband committee will seek to implement and suggest a solution that is best for the town, be it fiber or wireless
- A question was asked by a resident: Would the Broadband committee be willing to review a survey question for the town plan? The committee members agreed to.
- A question was asked by a resident: Are there federal or state funds available to improve internet connectivity? It was stated that there are, however, the committee members had not explored them in depth.
- A question was asked by a resident: How long will it take to get broadband connectivity to Mason? It was estimated that it could take approximately 1 year or longer
- A question was asked by a resident: Will there be data caps with Broadband? The answer is not known.
- A question was asked by a resident: What will be the determining factor for proposals. It was discussed by the committee that whatever is best for Mason would be an ideal solution. One that puts a priority on speed, coverage, and cost.
- A questions was asked by a resident: Has the committee considered mailing out information? The response was that the committee had, but has not yet committed to it since there is a cost associated with it.

Adjourned: There being no further business, Bill motioned to adjourn the meeting, seconded from Mike. Four votes to adjourn the meeting at 6:42 PM.