

TOWN OF BEDFORD
January 21, 2021
BEDFORD TELECOMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

A meeting of the Bedford Telecommunications Committee was held on Thursday, January 21, 2021 virtually over the Zoom platform. Present were: Bill Duschatko (Chairman/Town Council Rep), Kathleen Bemiss, Mike Koustas, Peter Michaleas, Court Mountifield (left 12:28 p.m.), Councilor Denise Ricciardi (left 12:27 p.m.), Chris Swiniarski, and David Tuttle. Also present: Rebecca Hebert, Planning Director, and Rick Sawyer, Town Manager.

Chairman Duschatko called the meeting to order at 11:30 a.m. and provided notice that the meeting was being conducted virtually due to the State of Emergency declared by the Governor as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and in accordance with the Governor's Emergency Order #12 pursuant to Executive Order 2020-04.

A roll call attendance was taken.

New Business

- General Discussion – The Committee discussed the status of the existing Comcast franchise agreement and if it could be amended to include broadband requirements. The possibility of a franchise agreement with Consolidated was discussed and it was noted that they may already have a fiber buildout in Bedford.
- Preference Survey – The Committee discussed the results of the survey that was conducted and questioned whether it should be done again. It was noted that current discussions on social media are indicating the desire for better service.
- Municipal Fiber Networks – The Committee discussed the status of various projects in NH. It was stated that Rindge has a fiber ring with an option to extend to the home. Some projects don't start until enough properties sign up to make it worth it. The Committee questioned who was paying the startup costs? Ms. Bemiss read a portion of the recent article regarding the project in Bristol, NH. It was noted that Bristol qualified under the rural definition for funding.

Councilor Ricciardi indicated that some people still want traditional cable TV and are not looking for streaming services. Mr. Koustas indicated that he could do a high level estimate of cost for the town. Mr. Tuttle indicated that if upload speeds don't increase then property values could go down. He indicated that the town needs to move forward as many jobs will not return to traditional offices and reliable high speed internet is needed now more than ever. Mr. Swiniarski agreed and reiterated that the town was not looking to make money by creating a municipal network.

Chairman Duschatko reviewed some payment options such as paying up front or paying over time with a lien. Mr. Koustas discussed the need for maintenance

agreements. Mr. Swiniarski questioned if we can negotiate with Eversource to hang fiber or how do we get access to the poles. Mr. Koustas indicated that most of the poles are under joint ownership between Eversource and Consolidated and there are pole rental agreements that can be as much as \$9 per pole. Ms. Bemiss asked if we could get some more information on how Bristol was able to make it work or have them present to the Committee? Mr. Swiniarski indicated that we should be looking to do the whole town. Mr. Koustas noted that other technology is also coming like AT&T pole top 5G in partnership with Dish Network. Councilor Ricciardi indicated her concerns with existing federal legislation and the monopolies in the industry.

Mr. Koustas described his work with SNHPC and the Town of Windham and indicated it should be reviewed along with Bristol. Mr. Michaleas questioned if any vendors provided financing? Mr. Koustas indicated that there were. Mr. Swiniarski questioned if we could get a list of fiber companies? Including ones that would provide financing? It was noted that we could set up meetings with private investors as well.

Mr. Swiniarski indicated that he could review the state statute and Mr. Koustas indicated he could provide an overview of cost for buildout in Bedford. Mr. Sawyer indicated he would reach out to the Town Administrator in Bristol.

There was general discussion on the benefits of direct bury versus pole mounted solutions including that micro trenching is an option. Chairman Duschatko indicate that Mr. Koustas had completed a map showing the areas for each carrier.

Chairman Duschatko adjourned the meeting at 12:53 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Rick Sawyer, Town Manager