

Town of Readsboro, Vermont
Broadband & Cell Committee
Regular Meeting
April 20, 2016

Present: Robert Marechal, Omar Smith, Rebecca Stone – Broadband & Cell Committee members

Call to Order

Meeting called to order at 5:00 p.m.

Agenda Additions/Deletions

None.

Approval of Agenda

Approved as posted.

Reading & Approval of Records

Omar moved to approve the minutes of April 13, 2016. Bob seconded. So voted.

Communications

Legislative efforts continue as Vermont House Bill H.870 was passed to raise additional funding to expand internet to 30,000 unserved and underserved Vermonters by raising \$1.6 million per year. The bill still needs to come through the Senate. A resolution approved by the House last week (House Resolution 19) asks USDA's Rural Utilities Service to conduct a financial and performance audit of a combination \$116 million federal grant and loan that the Vermont Telephone Company (VTel) received in 2010. In summary, as part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, VTel was also awarded an \$81.7 million grant and a \$35.2 million loan to bring fiber optics to the Springfield area and build 119 towers and antennas to set up a system of wireless broadband to cover 33,000 homes. To date, VTel has 1,000 wireless subscribers.

Old Business

A) Progress with Broadband and Cell Providers

Becky indicated that Verizon will be providing contact information as requested. Becky explained that outreach to CoverageCo, the company that was selected by the Vermont Telecommunications Authority to build and operate cellular network coverage expansion projects in 2014 and install small-cell technology on utility poles in 2011, inclusive of the Readsboro area, has offered a response to our request for a progress update to cellular coverage expansion.. The site in Readsboro is at the Fire Station and has been experiencing power issues and they have indicated a fix is in the works. As a note, CoverageCo was one company that received grant funds through U.S. Economic Development Administration subsequent to the 2011 flooding. Omar noted that testing by SVBC has not been scheduled. Bob reported that he has yet to receive a response to map updates from Fairpoint. Committee members will plan to drive around town in an effort to update maps and coverage areas.

B) Updates to Strategic Plan

Committee members will continue to add comments.

C) Discuss Setting Agenda for May 2016 Informational Meeting

Discussed introductions by BCC, followed by Fairpoint, Department of Public Service and legislators. Will define agenda at a future meeting.

New Business

A) Discuss Connectivity Meetings held in Towns of Halifax and Whitingham

Bob and Becky attended the Halifax VTel meeting while Omar and Bob attended the Whitingham Connectivity meeting. A Whitingham resident has offered to perform some testing in Readsboro for potential connection through VTel. A Wardsboro official indicated the meeting held in their town was hosted by VTel and was focused on sales. Becky and Bob reported the same discussions took place in Halifax and that basic questions to VTel from residents could not be

answered. Discussed formats of the meetings held. Omar explained that the Department of Public Service has state-owned fiber system that reaches south to Putney. FCC broadband is defined as 25 Mbps download and 1 Mbps upload. Discussed CAFII funding and in order to capture that funding providers need to reach benchmarks that include getting 10 Mbps download and 1Mbps upload and reaching 28,000 customers. Discussed formulating a group with other towns. A letter to neighboring towns requesting information to their connection progress and/or issues will be sent in a few weeks. Discussed mapping updates in an effort to identify coverage and non-coverage areas. Becky to research software availability.

Hearing of Visitors

None

Adjournment

Omar made a motion to adjourn at 6:15 p.m. Becky seconded. So voted.

Noted the next meeting will be held on Wednesday, May 4, 2016 at 5:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Rebecca Stone, Member, Broadband & Cell Committee