

Town of Readsboro, Vermont  
Broadband & Cell Committee  
Special Meeting  
May 23, 2016

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

Others: Ronald Waterman, Tiger Waterman, Deb Pavin, Mary King, Andrew Marchegiani, Normajean Marchegiani, David Marchegiani, Helyn Strom-Henriksen, Rhonda Smith, Charles Bailey, Teddy Hopkins, Raymond Eilers, Clay Purvis, Sunni Ericksen, Beth Fastiggi, Laura Sibilia, Brian Campion

Call to Order

Meeting called to order at 6:42 p.m.

New Business

Discussion on Broadband Availability and Cellular Service

Omar Smith offered an introduction to the progress the Broadband & Cell Committee has made since its start up in January. Topics included: creation of survey and spreadsheet, visiting other town connectivity meetings, communications with various providers, and ongoing communications with Department of Public Service and Legislators. Work continues on identifying coverage limits and developing a Strategic Plan for long-term planning, along with building maps of coverage areas with assistance from the Windham Regional Commission.

Beth Fastiggi, President, Fairpoint Communications, provided a Powerpoint presentation which outlined funding efforts since 2008 made by Fairpoint. Explanation of cabling and speeds offered. Fairpoint has one Central Office in Readsboro, with one hub (RT) in Heartwellville. Beth explained that costs to deliver one mile of service is \$25,000 with an additional \$50,000 to \$75,000 for equipment. Since funds are limited, trying to capture the most customers in an area needs to be cost-effective. An economic analysis is done by Fairpoint and their engineering staff make the decisions on projects based on data results. Readsboro subscriber analysis presented. Discussed included grant programs available on both State and Federal levels. Fairpoint has received \$8.8 million of CAFII funds in Vermont. To date, Fairpoint has done 29 projects in Vermont with an additional 90 projects in progress. Beth urged Readsboro to identify priority areas and forward that information to Fairpoint.

The application period for funding through the Vermont Department of Public Service opened today, with applications due in July. Clay Purvis explained that \$556,000 is available for service providers to apply. Clay explained that DPS telecommunications advisory board reviews the applications. DPS is currently working with other towns in situations similar to Readsboro. Beth explained that Fairpoint does not typically hit any roadblocks when it comes to securing easements on right of ways. Discussed the broadband system in Stamford which is served by volunteers.

Representative Laura Sibilia and Senator Brian Campion commented that there are ongoing efforts to secure funds to serve underserved broadband and cell areas in Vermont. Representative Sibilia stated that Readsboro has really brought connectivity issues to the attention of State officials.

BCC to identify priority areas for service and present to the Selectboard with the intention of getting the information to Fairpoint as soon as possible.

Omar thanked everyone for coming out to the meeting.

Adjournment

Omar made a motion to adjourn at 8:25 p.m. Becky seconded. So voted.

Respectfully submitted,

Rebecca Stone, Member  
Broadband & Cell Committee