



UPPER VALLEY LAKE SUNAPEE REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION

Upper Valley Lake Sunapee Region – Broadband Planning Program

Broadband Stakeholders' Meeting – Minutes 2/07/2013

Staff Present: Rachel Ruppel and Adam Ricker

Members of the Public Present: Bob Crane, Michelle Therrien, Jeff Kessler, Bernie Folta, Steve Biliski, Chuck Townsend, Leigh Callaway, Julia Griffin, Dennis Quinn and Charlotte McIver

The meeting commenced at 4:05 pm.

Rachel gave a brief overview on the regional broadband planning process, stating that this group is transitioning from the research and information-gathering stage to the writing-a-regional-broadband-plan stage. Bernie noted that the statewide database of Cable Franchise Agreements is very useful; Rachel recognized Adam Ricker's work in gathering that information for our region and noted that UNH will be posting a "Cable Franchise Agreements Explained" document online soon. Bernie noted that Vermont does a statewide cable franchise agreement and that NH had considered but rejected similar legislation some years ago. Bernie also asked how many town Master Plans address broadband as an issue; Rachel reported that RPC staff have just reviewed all town master plans, and this information will be available shortly. Rachel shared a request from the State Office of Energy and Planning for a shining example of a community working on broadband expansion and asked the group for feedback - she suggested that the 8-town WCNH.net organization, which joined forces with FastRoads, might be a good example.

Rachel informed the group of a bill in the legislature that would amend state law to allow municipalities to bond for broadband. A hearing on HB286 will be held on February 26, 2013 at 10 am at the House Science, Technology and Environment Committee. Jeff noted that HB 286 would not solve the problem with pole attachments; Bernie noted that there is a political issue surrounding taxation of utility poles by municipalities. Julia agreed that HB 286 does not address pole attachments, and offered that there could be two ways a municipality could handle pole attachments – (1) support a third-party pole attacher like FastRoads who would go through the pole licensing or (2) argue for a municipality's twelve inches of pole for a municipally-run network. She noted that the second option has not been tried yet in the state. Dennis asked if HB 286 would apply to wireless; Rachel read from the bill's proposed language that broadband includes "a range of technologies including digital subscriber line and fiber optic cable, coaxial cable, wireless technology and satellite." Bernie noted the long list of capital items that municipalities can already bond for.

Adam announced that he would like to shift the agenda, and skip over the results of the regional broadband forums – he provided copies of the forum results to all present. He reported that the Commission is conducting interviews of businesses and organizations in different sectors of the region's economy – he asked for help from regional stakeholders in making introductions and getting a foot in the door with certain entities. Stakeholders offered to help with introductions; Adam will follow up individually after the meeting.

Michelle Therrien of Lakes Regional Planning Commission provided an overview of the Lakes Region's broadband stakeholder group's activities and their pilot project in Danbury to quantify underserved areas and populations and work towards solutions with a diverse group of stakeholders. Her presentation slides are attached to these minutes, and a summary of her presentation follows here. Danbury residents, who are active in the stakeholders' group, have conducted field surveys and community surveys to refine the broadband availability maps; the refined maps show where the cable or DSL stops and which homes have or do not have broadband. Now they can start to compare gaps in service with the residential density required in the cable franchise agreement. They have been in touch with Comcast's Director of Government and Community Affairs and hope he will attend their next meeting to discuss potential viable solutions. Another possible solution, which will be investigated is utilizing Ragged Mountain's infrastructure to create a fixed wireless network. Michelle related that they are proceeding on a town-by-town basis, because each town has unique needs; the next town will likely be Moultonborough. Moultonborough has a dedicated fund for broadband; Michelle was not certain how this money was raised, but will look into it. Dennis noted that Danbury was selected as the first pilot project because it had the greatest number of stakeholders in the group and included some very energetic individuals.

Dennis Quinn presented on the Tamworth Wireless Cooperative. The Town of Tamworth's latest master plan survey identified broadband as its #1 need. There was service in the village center but not in outlying areas, and the low density of the population made wired service cost-prohibitive. In neighboring Sandwich, Gunnar Berg had set up a fixed wireless network, and a group of Tamworth residents were interested to create a similar network in their town. They studied the terrain and planned a wireless network that would link a church (with an Internet connection) to a fire tower and then to two other towers, and the signal would cover 200 homes in the outlying areas of town. Two years ago, they formed the Tamworth Wireless Cooperative (TWC) and received \$100,000 in start-up costs from the Tamworth Community Foundation; now, in their second year, 113 of the 200 households have subscribed and the venture is now self-sustaining. TWC works with Time Warner Cable, who connected the church to their cable service; TWC pays \$1,300/month for 50MB of symmetrical fiber as a business customer. There are four tiers of pricing, and have not yet run into any problems with maxing out their bandwidth – the highest they have utilized is 27MB of bandwidth. Dennis reported that TWC is not regulated by the FCC, and that Tamworth does not have zoning, so TWC did not need to apply for any town planning or zoning approvals. He noted that Sandwich does have zoning, but wrote into their Personal Wireless Service Facility ordinance that a wireless network is allowed.

Jeff remarked that this could be a good solution in Croydon or other towns with low population density. Julia reported that DesignNine is designing options for connecting rural areas for the Town of Lyme that includes wireless hubs; this would build off the FastRoads fiber network that extends along Route 10; the Lyme Community Foundation may be a funder.

Dennis asked about the possibility of connecting to NetworkNHNow's fiber that is being installed around the state – he asked about cost and when the fiber would be used to provide service. Julia reported that NetworkNHNow's statewide fiber has 256 strands – 12 are for FastRoads, 12 are for UNH, and Waveguide will own 224 – Waveguide will be talking directly with service providers about utilizing their service. In the FastRoads service area, FastRoads has 48 strands. The NetworkNHNow fiber will connect to the Massachusetts Broadband Institute (MBI) network and Maine's network called the Three-Ring Binder. Julia reported that the direct connection to Massachusetts is expected to reduce the cost of fiber-based service by half. The question was asked about whether any service providers would want to provide service over a publicly-funded network versus its own

network – Julia reported that Fairpoint is now providing service over Maine’s 3-Ring Binder, and that Fairpoint was able to get a concession from their union to allow utilization of a non-union-maintained network. She also stated that FastRoads is negotiating an agreement with Axia to operate their network, and there are four service providers waiting to sign service agreements once the Axia contract is signed. She also reported that Axia operates MBI’s network, with 26 different providers, and stated that she expected some of those providers to offer service in the FastRoads area.

Several members of the stakeholders’ group agreed that TWC’s model should be shared as a case study. Bernie reported that he checked the NH Secretary of State’s website and noted that TWC is not currently in good standing.

Next Steps – The group suggested taking a town-by-town look at broadband access and availability, similar to Danbury’s refined mapping, and then looking across town boundaries at regional under-served areas and opportunities for collaboration. Charlotte noted that Danbury’s stakeholder volunteers led the project by calling, emailing and communicating via Facebook to find out what service was available or unavailable at individual residences.

Lakes Region Broadband Stakeholder Group

Presenting to
Upper Valley Lake Sunapee
Broadband Stakeholder Group
February 7, 2013

Representation

LRPC Commissioners
CEDS Members
Public Access TV Affiliates
Planning Board Members
Conservation Commission Members
Service Providers
Tele-commuters
Health Care Professionals
Interested Citizens

Beginnings

April 2012 – Recruit for BSG
Scott Valcourt, Director of Strategic
Technology, UNH

June 2012
First BSG Meeting

October 2012
Carol Miller, Director of Broadband
Technology, NH DRED

Pilot Project

1. Identify underserved areas
2. Identify broadband service technology
3. Identify broadband service providers
4. Quantify underserved population
5. Identify local broadband advocates
6. Identify sector based stakeholders
7. Develop solutions

Identify underserved areas

*Identify broadband technology
and service providers*

Quantify underserved population

Identify local broadband advocates

Identify sector based stakeholders

Develop viable solutions

Questions?

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