

Plainfield Broadband Committee
Meeting Minutes June 26, 2016

Committee Members Present: Brian Hawthorne, Howard Bronstein, Leslie Rule, Lew Robbins, Kimberly Longey, Sally Silberberg

Brian Hawthorne called the meeting to order at 7:05 PM at Town Hall.

Brian reviewed the proposed agenda. Kimberly agreed to take notes for this meeting.

A motion was made and seconded to approve the minutes of the June 13, 2016 meeting. The motion passed unanimously.

Brian provided a summary of the June 14, 2016 meeting with Bill Ennen. There was no quorum of the broadband committee so the meeting was informational purposes only. Brian circulated notes of the meeting to committee members.

The committee reviewed and discussed the last mile program and readiness process as outlined by MBI. Lew noted the importance of identifying the range of decisions needed by our committee or the Selectboard and the need to outline the timing of same. In addition to the basic information outlined in the MBI documents we need to anticipate other decisions.

A discussion ensued about the pros and cons of proceeding into the MBI readiness assessment as a single town, as a small cluster, or as part of a larger regional network. The reality is that the readiness process, "make ready" work, network specification design/engineering, and network construction process are still going to take some years before broadband is accessible to Plainfield residents and businesses. Because WiredWest's original plan to build, own and operate a regional network is not currently considered by the Baker Administration as a viable alternative, and in context that WiredWest's revised plan to serve as a service provider and administrative agent for its member towns has not yet been fully formed, the committee agreed it is important for Plainfield to keep all options on the table, while also moving as quickly as possible within the new MBI broadband program options.

The general sense of the committee members is to continue sharing information with neighboring towns and to keep open the possibility of formalizing a small grouping of towns to work together during design/build and then subsequent phases of the project. However, some committee members noted that absent any information from MBI about what MBI may require for towns who wish to engage in a multi-municipal network it is difficult to formally pursue a consortium or small regional cluster. In context of committee member's desire to focus on moving Plainfield's broadband agenda forward as quickly as possible, it seems that the "independent municipal network" option, one of six options available in the MBI last mile broadband program is the best choice for the committee and for Plainfield.

A motion was made and seconded that Plainfield broadband committee strongly favors “Independent Town Network” as our town’s choice, with the clarification that Plainfield strongly supports the concepts of regionalism and cooperation wherever possible. After some discussion, the motion passed unanimously.

The committee agreed that beginning the readiness process with MBI in August was best timing for the group. Brian noted that he would be on vacation and out of town until the end of July. he asked for someone to fill in to post the meeting agendas and to chair the meetings in his absence. Leslie Rule offered to do these things for the month of July.

Leslie Rule provided an update on the status of WiredWest.

Kimberly Longey summarized an array of communications received from neighboring towns, from local newspapers and articles from media and technology blogs. She noted the opportunity to attend a meeting with representatives of USDA in Ashfield on July 27.

Brian reported that the Plainfield Planning board is transferring responsibility for exploration of project ideas suitable for the Community Compact initiative to the Board of Selectmen. Howard reported that that board will pursue learning about what is possible under that program. Plainfield’s broadband needs will be incorporated into any future proposed community compact where appropriate.

The meeting adjourned at 9:00 PM.

Upcoming meeting schedule for the month of July:

Monday July 11 7PM Town Hall

Monday July 25 7PM Town Hall

Minutes above as approved at the 2016-07-25 meeting.