

Acworth Broadband Project – Board of Selectman Initial Update – 4 Jan 2021

Gregg Thibodeau, Acworth Broadband Project Lead

Problem Statement

- Businesses and families are becoming more and more reliant on high-speed internet access. Online schooling, healthcare, training, work-from home, church services, family and individual businesses, shopping, entertainment, etc.
- Current DSL has a finite limit of 11mb/3mb (download/upload) speeds assuming they can provide you with bonded or double DSL lines.
- DSL without bonding has a limit of 7mb/1mb (download/upload). Standard service is 3/1 but you can pay for 7/1. I have 7/1 and I typically experience actual speeds of 6.2mb/0.7mb.

Issues, risks:

- Consolidated states that 7/1 can only support 3-4 devices in your home. This includes cell phones, laptops, tablets, DirecTV, other internet connected devices; A family of 2 typically will have at least 4 devices, 2 cell phones and two computers
- Working from home, healthcare, schooling, businesses, and training is requiring video conferencing more frequently now. Video and audio streaming significantly impacts the bandwidth of an internet connection.
- Satellite TV companies leverage video via your internet for DVR's and movie selections
- Loss of tax revenue. 30% of Acworth folks are over age 65, according to NH government published analysis. <https://www.nhes.nh.gov/elmi/products/cp/profiles-htm/acworth.htm>; To keep our tax base we need to attract folks to move to Acworth. Fortunately for us COVID has attracted a number of new families who intend to retire here. Unfortunately, the newer generation requires high-speed internet.

Personal experience

- Worked remotely for 9 years from Acworth prior to COVID 19 as a senior director leading multi-million-dollar national efforts.
- I was on the phone 9 of 12 months per year dealing with issues with my 7/1 service performing poorly with both FairPoint and now Consolidated. The last feedback that I received in Q1 of 2020 was that I have the best they can offer. Therefore, whenever I had a meeting, I had to let Maureen know so she could stay away from the internet. Unfortunately, she requires the internet for both of her businesses.
- When COVID hit we had our son temporarily reside with us from March/April through July timeframe. Unfortunately, with the 3 of us we had to take turns accessing the internet.

Committee Goals

Define options, costs and benefits of establishing broadband in Acworth

Obtain approval of Planning Board, Board of Selectman and Town (via 2 town meetings, 2 mandatory public hearings and one warrant article)

** Solicit and obtain proposals from vendors (2 primary, NHEC, Consolidated)

** Obtain bonds (if required)

** Contract with Vendor (if required)

** Oversee production rollout

** Pending approvals and dependent on the option we proceed with

Concept

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- Determine options for the town to establish broadband internet access via meetings with towns, vendors, and bonding agents
- Define costs and impact to debt associated to any bonds, subscriber costs, etc. (includes a cost to benefit analysis)
- Communicate objectives, costs and benefit to Planning Board, Board of Selectman and Town (Feb newsletter, Facebook, 2021 town meeting)
- Obtain approval from Planning Board, Board of Selectman to proceed
- Solicit vendors for proposals (2 primary vendors, NHEC and Consolidated)
- Conduct 2 mandatory public hearings to review RFP responses and Funding
- Create warrant article for town meeting (March 2022)

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Calendar Year	Task Required (NHEC, Internet Provider [IP], Both)	Actions	Due Date	Status	Completion Date
Q1 2021	Both	Establish Contacts in Surrounding Town (Unity, Marlow, Alstead, Charlestown, Goshen)	Dec-2020	Complete	28-Dec-21
	Both	Establish Committee	Jan-2021	In-Progress	
	Both	Define draft plan	Jan-2021	Complete	04-Jan-21
	IP	Establish Contact & Consult with Consolidated Communications Inc (CCI)	Dec-2020	Complete	04-Jan-21
	NHEC	Establish Contact & Consult with NHEC	Dec-2020	Complete	04-Jan-21
	IP	Obtain Alstead plan	12/2020	Complete	28-Dec-21
	IP	Obtain RFI and RFP examples	Dec-2020	Complete	28-Dec-21
	IP	Consult with Goshen, Marlow obtain bonding guidance	Dec-2020	Complete	28-Dec-21
	IP	Consult with bonding specialist (Renelle L.)	Dec-2020	Complete	04-Jan-21
	IP	Develop and initiate a survey via online and via USPS mail.	Jan-2021	In-Progress	
	Both	Determine list of providers for RFI's and RFP's	Dec-2020	Complete	28-Dec-21
	NHEC	Determine options for Liberty customers and develop next steps if we pursue NHEC option	Jan-2021		
	Both	#1 Town Communication - Initial objectives (via town newsletter and Facebook pages)	Jan-2021	In-Progress	
	Both	Determine "% served" (This will determine if we are eligible to pursue the public-private bonding option. Requires and RFI)	Jan-2021	In-Progress	
	Both	Determine funding options and impacts	Jan-2021	In-Progress	
	Both	Develop and submit an RFI to known incumbent providers, primarily Consolidated and NHEC	Jan-2021	In-Progress	
	NHEC	Confirm schedule post 31 Jan 2021	Feb-2021		
	Both	Update plan, review with Planning Board and Board of Selectman	Feb-2021		
	Both	#2 Town Communication Update (via March newsletter, Facebook pages and town meeting)	Mar-2021		

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Calendar Year	Task Required (NHEC, Internet Provider [IP], Both)	Actions	Due Date	Status	Completion Date
Q2-Q3 2021	IP	Develop an RFP			
	IP	Retain bond counsel			
	IP	RFP issued by Selectboard. Establish RFP deadline			
	IP	Receive RFPs			
	IP	Broadband committee reviews submitted proposals and sends recommendation to the Select Board.			
	IP	SB authorizes contract negotiation with the chosen vendor.			
	IP	Select Board holds first public hearing to present public benefit findings.			
Q3-Q4 2021	IP	Develop Warrant Article			
	IP	Warrant Article approved by state.			
	IP	Select Board holds second public hearing to present public benefit findings.			
Q1 2022	IP	Warrant Article reviewed at 2022 March Town Meeting			
	IP	Bond Article passed at town meeting by $\frac{3}{5}$ vote.			
Q2-Q3 2022	IP	Final contract executed by SB and private vendor.			
	IP	Application submitted to New Hampshire Municipal Bond Bank.			
	IP	Bonds are sold by the NHMBB.			
	IP	Construction of network begins.			
	IP	Bond funds distributed to Town.			
	IP	Residential connections to network begin.			