

June 1, 2023

Meeting Notes

Loudon Economic Development Committee Meeting

Attendees: EDC Members: Stephen Caine, Jeff Miller, Per Garp, Rodney Phillips. Central NH Regional Planning Commission: Mike Tardiff, Vincent Pagano. Other: Ken Folsom of Canterbury, JD, and Margaret Brown of Mission Broadband

The June 1 meeting of the Loudon Economic Development Committee was called to order at 5:30 pm. JD from Mission Broadband reviewed the meetings that were held with several internet service providers (ISPs). Of the ISPs that were contacted, Consolidated Communications Incorporated (CCI) and Comcast accepted meetings with Mission Broadband. CCI received 40 million dollars to aid in building fiber to homes in NH and Loudon was not included in the list of towns that will benefit from that. CCI noted that fiber will take an investment and capital funds from a source as they do not plan to fund the buildout alone. For a fiber buildout in Loudon CCI is the only option currently.

The meeting with Comcast resulted in an explanation of what is already covered in Loudon. Much of the town is served by their cable internet service, they have no fiber service in Loudon. Comcast said the potential return on investment in Loudon alone is too little to justify a buildout any further than what is already in place. Comcast stated they are looking to meet the newest DOCSIS 4.0 standard which can increase upload and download speeds through a cable modem.

TDS did not respond to setting a meeting date but said they have no plans to expand service.

Breezeline declined to meet and said they have no plans to expand in Loudon.

Asked what the options are moving forward, Mission Broadband and Mr. Tardiff agreed the next step is to start a conversation with the state to identify capital fund project money availability and get an update on the BEAD funding availability timeline. Understanding where the state is at will help Loudon plan its next steps. The new FCC location data showing served addresses is out now, so the National Telecommunications and Information Administration and FCC can say by the end of June what extra BEAD funding will be allocated. Mission Broadband and CNHRPC will be meeting with Matt Conserva, the Broadband Program Manager at the State of New Hampshire on the week of June 4. New Hampshire must spend the BEAD money on unserved locations, and this will likely use the full amount of BEAD funds.

Mission Broadband and Margaret Brown reviewed the gap analysis that Mission Broadband produced. The northern quarter of Loudon and near Old Shaker Road has several unserved locations. CCI provides broadband to Loudon Village and the southern part of Route 106. Xfinity covers most of Loudon, but members of the EDC mentioned reliability is not great. Following review of the rest of the gap analysis Mr. Tardiff brought up the next steps; depending on the choice, how does the Loudon EDC move forward? If Loudon has interest in pursuing a capital project to get fiber to the home, could the Town get a cost estimate. Mr. Caine said he is interested in the bottom-line cost. If Loudon were to pursue a buildout from CCI, would the current market leader in Loudon, Xfinity, retaliate with higher prices or poor service? The EDC believed there would be no backlash, as it would add competition and potentially lower prices as seen in larger communities like Concord. Mr. Phillips asked how the shift to streaming only household and "cable-cutters" has affected willingness to shop for internet only packages. JD said CCI has slowed expansion in general, due to low willingness to change ISPs. Mr. Tardiff said the issue with changing can also come from the difficulty of switching because of ISPs lack of willingness to help a customer unsubscribe. There was concern raised about Loudon residents' ability to be aware of the

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option to switch and the process that goes along with that. Following the concerns, attention was brought to the potential path to getting a second ISP in Loudon. Finding support from the State is a priority, as well as finding money from ARPA or another funding source.

Conversation about the potential to have unserved areas in adjoining towns like Canterbury to get served started, and Ken Folsom, Town Administrator from Canterbury spoke on his town's conversation with Xfinity/Comcast. In his conversation with the ISP, Mr. Folsom said there is 25 million dollars left in the funding not related to BEAD. Since lots of towns in New Hampshire have partial coverage, there is interest in understanding the state's stance on filling the gaps in service. The consensus from the EDC and guests was that the state's messaging on the current funding that is available seems convoluted, and they are hoping to get more answers after the meeting with Matt Conserva at the State.

The EDC then considered bringing the information from this meeting about ISP willingness to expand and the current available options to the Select Board in Loudon. The EDC supported bringing these topics to the Select Board and hearing their input. It was raised that there is no clear path forward at the moment. There was support from the EDC to move forward with CCI following the Select Board input. CNHRPC and Mission Broadband will talk with Matt Conserva.

Jeff Miller motioned to approve the minutes from the May 4, 2023, meeting. Per Garp seconded the motion and the minutes passed unanimously with no changes. Vincent Pagano has been recording the minutes and having them uploaded to the Loudon EDC Website.

The EDC would like to ask Mission Broadband for a review of processes that have worked for other towns in this situation. Mr. Garp asked if community outreach could be an option to gauge interest, and Mr. Tardiff said that is an option some towns use.

The next Loudon EDC is July 6 at 5:30pm.

Jeff Miller motioned to adjourn, Per Garp seconded and the Loudon EDC adjourned unanimously at 6:25pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Vincent Pagano