

MEETING MINUTES

EATERN SLOPES BROADBAND COMMITTEE

Date: May 15, 2024,

Time: 6:30 PM

Meeting called to order by: Jamie Ritter

IN ATTENDANCE

Jamie Ritter, Bill Findeisen, Terry Lockhead, Tom Clay, Carl Lindblade, Neal Littlefield, Amy March, Chris Wentworth, Eric Gulbranson, Jamie Popkin, Jeremy Hammer, Jill Rundle, Kerry Welton, Mia Purcell, Michael Stacy, Nat, Karns, Patrick Bryant, Rob Flint, Toni Segar

UPDATES

Bill Findeisen spoke for the three towns in the ReachMe award, Denmark, Fryeburg, and Lovell. Jamie has been copying the members with the emails from Kendra Jo at the MCA. Her last update was that there is no news different from the previous update that said they were close to signing the contract with Spectrum and the deadline was 05-17-2024. They are still not able to share an address list for the proposed new service locations.

Spectrum must have confidence that they will come to an agreement because they are already doing a tremendous amount of installation work in Denmark. Bill talked to the Spectrum technician, and they said they had already been working in Fryeburg and planned to start in Lovell after finishing Denmark.

Tom Clay gave the update on the franchise agreement work for the four towns of Stoneham, Sweden, Stow, and Brownfield. Tom said that the work with the attorney and Spectrum was in the final draft and that Stoneham's selectboard has approved the language. The other three towns plan to use the same agreement.

DISCUSSION

Jamie asked if the towns have reconciled their address lists with the one provided by Spectrum. He said that Dick Norcross from Brownfield says their list is complete. Stow is working on it but thinks that Spectrum's list will pass all locations even if it is missing a few locations. Sweden is good with their list as is Stoneham.

Kerry brought up that the towns should have their cable ordinance in place before signing the franchise agreements. There was a discussion of whether the ordinances need to be in place before signing a franchise agreement. Kerry said their attorney said it is preferable and that Sweden was working on one and it generally had the same terms as the franchise agreement.

There was a discussion about adopting an ordinance and if the selectboard could enact one without a vote at a town meeting. The conclusion was that selectboards can enact an ordinance, but they need to have public notice and discussion at a selectboard meeting to do so.

Jeremy asked what we will do about locations that may be “left out” in the new service. Bill said that the MCA has promised a “true up” process and had funds set aside to connect locations that are missed. Denmark has provided the MCA with a comprehensive list of locations for Denmark. The MCA said they have received authority to fund locations that are not on the National Broadband Map if they verify those locations.

Jeremy suggested we use the website to collect information from residents that may be missed.

Jamie asked Terry L. to work on a communication update that can be posted.

Jamie R presented a spreadsheet that showed the logic he is suggesting for the split of the remaining funds in the treasury. The attorney’s charges for the first draft may not be all billed yet so the figures are not final, but he asked if all the town leads were OK with the logic he used. All agreed it was fair. When the remaining invoices are settled Betty L. will return each towns share to them.

NEXT MEETING(S)

Jamie R. asked if the group thought continuing meetings with all seven towns represented had value given the divergence of the direction of the three towns vs. the four towns.

Amy March said the meetings were helpful in getting information so she can answer questions from interested people. Jamie asked if he should try to schedule separate meetings with Spectrum for the three-town group and the four-town group and all thought that was a good idea. The ReachMe contract should be signed soon, and Spectrum should be able to offer more detail.

The four-town group should have their franchise agreements in place soon as well so Spectrum should be able to discuss coverage and timing.

Jamie said he would reach out to Kate Gore at Spectrum and try to arrange the meetings.

The group thanked Jamie Ritter for his leadership and the meeting closed at 7:30PM.