

Town of Deerfield
Cable Committee
August 12, 2021
DRAFT Minutes

The meeting began at 7:03pm in the GBW building Board of Selectman conference room.

Present: Tyler Boutwell (Chair), Lisa Dufresne (Secretary), Michael M^{ac}Cannell, Scott Stantial, Harriet Cady

This was the first meeting of those interested in serving on the town's cable committee. The group is charged with studying options for cable and high-speed internet in the town of Deerfield as the current franchise agreement with Metrocast, now Atlantic Broadband (ABB), expires at midnight on December 31, 2023. Committee goals include gathering information about the options available to the town, and presenting those options, and a recommendation, to the Board of Selectman.

After discussion of roles, Tyler Boutwell agreed to be the committee chair, and Lisa Dufresne agreed to take the minutes.

Harriet Cady gave the group some history on the current contract as well as on the activities done by the prior cable committee. She explained that at one time Metrocast (now ABB) had 1300 or so subscribers in town, but that is now down to about 800. By way of reference, the town's population is in the 5400 range with approximately 2100 households. These are estimates to give the group a sense of how big Deerfield is a market for cable and internet providers. Or actually, how small.

Michael M^{ac}Connell is in the business of building communication towers and was able to educate the group on the old cable wiring (coaxial or coax) versus newer fiber optics systems, and also about how cable and internet providers gain access to the poles that carry power lines. He also described a company (Tilson, tilsontech.com) that brings high speed broadband and other information infrastructure to small and rural communities. But they're even more interesting because they also help towns apply for grant funding to pay for internet infrastructure (including laying high speed internet cable or replacing old wire with newer wire). In this capacity, it's likely that Tilson is very well versed in the kinds of grants that are available to the town, including what may become available in the infrastructure bill which currently includes \$billions for expanded high speed internet. Michael will follow up with the company to learn more and bring the information back to the committee.

The group also discussed how the town is served by two different power companies (New Hampshire Electric Coop or NHEC and Eversource). NHEC is currently piloting a program where it offers high speed internet services and Lisa Dufresne mentioned that they are going after funding to expand the program. Lisa will follow up with NHEC to learn more about the timeframes and how many potential customers in Deerfield may be served.

Harriet offered to call NHEC and learn about "attachment fees" which is the fee that a cable/internet provider pays the pole owners (typically the power companies) to put their cable onto those poles.

All agreed it would be helpful to get a copy of the current contract to better understand it.

After some discussion of options, Tyler offered to contact Verizon and Comcast about their services and potential interest in serving the town and understand what is necessary to get to yes.

After discussion of how cable may be an outdated term and that high-speed internet provider may be more current, Scott suggested the group might call itself the internet or broadband committee.

The group discussed how it would be helpful to expand and include other interested people in town, and also want to provide a way for residents to offer suggestions and ideas if they are unable to come to meetings. Tyler offered residents the option of emailing him directly at t.bon3416@gmail.com. Tyler also offered to post on social media about the committee's meetings and that we welcome new members.

The group agreed to meet on Thursdays at 7pm at the GBW building, Selectman's meeting room at 7pm. Due to vacation, the next meeting will be September 2, at 7pm. All are welcome.

The meeting adjourned at 8:35pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Lisa Dufresne