

Town of Deerfield
Cable Committee
September 3, 2021
DRAFT Minutes

Cable committee members appointed, with contact information, include:

Harriet Cady – kd4318@yahoo.com

Thomas Nadeau – tnadeau@lucidvision.com

Tyler Boutwell – Chair - tbon3416@gmail.com

Lisa Dufresne – Secretary - Dufresne.lisa@gmail.com

Scott Stantial – sstantial@hotmail.com

Riley King – rileyking12@gmail.com

Michael Maccannell – maccannell1@verizon.net

Present: Tyler Boutwell, Scott Stantial, Lisa Dufresne

Agenda:

1. Call to Order/Roll Call

The meeting began at 7:07 PM in the GBW building Board of Selectman conference room.

2. Greetings and Introductions

No audience members were present at the meeting opening.

3. Set rules for new motions

Members decided to have motions pass on a simple majority. No second required. Tyler moved that motions would require no second and a simple majority to pass. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Scott moved to send out emails to the group 3 days before a meeting as a reminder. **The motion passed unanimously.** Tyler offered to send the email.

4. Review current contract with Atlantic Broadband

Push to next meeting when more committee members are here.

5. Discuss committees' findings with local providers

Scott brought up a post on the Deerfield FB page where he mentioned this meeting was occurring tonight. He also mentioned that there was a post about Consolidated Communications.

Tyler mentioned that some of his Deerfield neighbors have Consolidated Communications, on Coffeetown Rd and Cate Rd. He wondered if it is coming down from Northwood. Tyler suggested the committee find out how much of the town is on ABB versus other services like Consolidated Communications. Scott mentioned that Rep. Terry Roy is introducing a bill that holds the cable

companies liable for outages. He tried to introduce the legislation before but there was no public comment (no one went to comment, though it was covid time which may explain why).

Scott will reach out to Rep. Roy to find out how we can help support the bill. Perhaps written comments would be accepted so more people can get involved.

Lisa will call Consolidated Communications to find out what part of Deerfield has them, how many customers, etc.

Lisa reviewed her discussion with NHEC, notes are attached to these minutes. After discussion, Lisa will call NHEC again to ask what the cost was to put in the pilot program in terms of cost for the lines and the size of the service area. That way we can have a ballpark figure of the cost to put in new fiber optic cable.

Discussion of whether Eversource is planning on offering high speed like NHEC is and whether it is possible to service the town with high-speed internet using a range of companies (NHEC, Consolidated Communications, etc.).

6. Discuss future plans to reach new providers

The committee determined that it would be helpful to have a Deerfield map that shows all the different providers, and also providers of the surrounding towns.

Scott will call Candia to find out what is going on regarding high speed internet and cable in that town.

Lisa mentioned she contacted someone in Raymond who offered to discuss that town's last renewal of their cable contract. Lisa will contact him to discuss in more detail and see if he would come and speak to the group.

Tyler will ask John Harrington about the Consolidated Communications contract and why some folks in town have that service.

Overall the goal is to understand all the service providers in Deerfield and possibly surrounding towns to get a sense of what the internet/cable provider landscape looks like.

7. Discuss how to get the community more involved

The committee discussed how to get more exposure and more input. Scott suggested putting up a sign, perhaps at the fairgrounds or at the park. And post simple paper printouts at the post office and other places around town. The goal is to let more people know we're meeting and to come to our meetings. Tyler suggested we create a FB page and post our minutes on the Deerfield community page. And then people can message the cable committee FB page (but we won't have an active FB page where people can post because we don't have the ability to moderate a new page). Tyler will work on getting that done.

8. Set motion to change committee name

The committee had a discussion of a new name. Tyler moved to change the group's name to the "Deerfield Internet Services Committee." **The motion passed unanimously.**

9. Closing questions or comments

Scott mentioned that we should have a plan for having meetings remotely if we can't meet in person (i.e. if Covid requires it, etc.). Tyler will ask John if the town has a Zoom account that allows for larger meetings that last over an hour. The free Zoom is too limited.

10. Plan future committee meeting

Next meeting will be Thursday, September 16th at 6:30 PM in the selectman's conference room.

The meeting adjourned at 8:17 pm.

Respectfully submitted by Lisa Dufresne

Appendix:

NHEC, August 31, 2021 phone call between Lisa Dufresne (Cable committee member) and Michael LiCata, NHEC VP of member services and public affairs, 603-327-9368

NHEC's broadband program is designed to bring high speed internet to the NHEC member area (85,000 co-op members right now). The plan involves ONLY high-speed internet and does NOT include telephone (though that will likely come later) and does NOT include television (i.e. no cable television). Their Board of Directors adopted a goal that all 85k co-op members have access to reliable and affordable high-speed internet.

Right now, there are pilot programs in parts of four towns (that had no high-speed internet at all, NHEC got grant funding for this program because of that fact). These are Colebrook, Stewartstown, and Clarksville (all near the Canadian border) and Lempster (just SE of Claremont). Two new projects will involve Acworth (just west of Lempster) and Sandwich (just north of Moultonborough).

The larger project will be reaching out to the NHEC communities. This will be done with funding from the America Rescue Plan which comes through the state, which hasn't yet announced how those funds will be dispersed. The state received \$121M to support broadband expansion, and other towns and counties have received funding as well. There is significant funding available and NHEC wants to be well positioned to get some of it.

Currently there are around 800 NHEC members in Deerfield. And as far as the rollout of the broadband, they are focused primarily on bringing high speed internet service to their customers, especially those that don't have it yet. Their timeline for this larger project rollout is really driven by access to grants. NHEC is not a cable franchise so they aren't looking for an exclusive franchise that requires town approval (only cable video service has these franchise requirements). Their ability to roll out has more to do with funding. That being said, towns with existing cable will still get this service, it's not an either/or situation. So regardless of what Deerfield decides to do about its cable, NHEC will still be rolling out this high-speed service to its customers.

Q&A

Q: What is the timeline for NHEC for full rollout of their high-speed internet to all member towns and customers?

A: Right now they are talking about a 3 year window for all services to be deployed.

Q: We've heard there are contractors who can, on behalf of a town, apply for grant funding to install fiber optic lines that provide high speed internet. If the grant is approved, that contractor typically installs the lines and the town owns them. At that point, the town could give the lines to a cable company or someone else to provide service to the town, and not have to maintain the lines. The benefit here is that it's less expensive for the cable company (because they didn't have to pay for that line upgrade) so more companies may be interested in serving the town. Under that scenario (or another we perhaps haven't discovered yet), would NHEC consider offering high speed internet to other Deerfield residents that aren't NHEC customers?

A: It's possible and NHEC would love to work with Deerfield on a solution. NHEC and Deerfield should continue to discuss this option. The one thing NHEC wants to avoid is the situation where we don't duplicate effort, so that NHEC and the town of Deerfield don't have competing applications for funding. That's why a continued dialogue here will be critically important.

Q: Would the NHEC be willing to go outside of its territory to offer services generally?

A: We are open to it, but our priority is our members. But if the economics work for a larger buildout of the service, they would certainly consider it. But right now NHEC is **ONLY** focused on high speed internet. Later we plan to bring in telephone service. But we are not really thinking that we'd offer television. We won't be a complete cable substitute.

Q: Our contract expires the end of next year (about 16 months). Is this enough time for a project with NHEC and Deerfield to be completed?

A: We would need to be continuously talking. We're not completely sure we'd have the service in place by then, so we'd have to keep talking (NHEC and Deerfield) to track the progress and make sure it fits with what the town needs.

Q: For those 4 towns with the high-speed pilot, and the other two towns you are rolling it out in, do they all have cable today? Are they thinking they may just move to NHEC high speed internet and forego cable going forward as their cable franchise agreements expire? Is there a chance to build a larger market for NHEC with high speed that may ultimately also include television?

A: The four towns were chosen because they had no internet, that's why the grant funding came through. But Sandwich has no cable franchise there at all, so there is an example of a town that will just rely on NHEC. Also, we also have a vision of a larger service base and possibly combine towns to create a service area for television. But that's in the future.