

Minutes from The Concord Fiber Broadband Task Force September 23, 2021, 6:30 PM held virtually via Zoom.

A recording is available at:

Concord Fiber Broadband Task Force - September 23, 2021

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QMPi45Eh_FI

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 PM by chair Mark Howell
Present via roll call were: Gail Hire, David Hesel, Gordon Brockway, Scott Hopkinson.
David Hesel volunteered to be Clerk for the meeting.

A motion was made by Gordon Brockway to approve the September 15, 2021 minutes as revised and seconded by Scott Hopkinson and unanimously approved by roll call of all the members.

Discussion of Charge

Terri Ackerman from the Select Board commented that if changes to the Select Board charge were needed we should note such to the Select Board.
Gordon suggested taking the exclusions (5G, wireless etc) out of the Select Board charge and it was decided, at least at the moment, to work with the charge to extend fiber toward completion for now and potentially revisit the charge at a later time after developing a more detailed work plan.

Work Plan

Discussion moved on to the last 5-7% of streets (last mile). Mark gave the background of Fiberoptic install over the past years. Certain streets had no conduit or where the cost of conduit was prohibitive. A list of these streets is available from the GIS survey. No cost has been developed for these streets. Scott volunteered to bring the information from the GIS survey back to the committee.

Mark noted that it costs \$1M/mile to underground the electric system and Gordon said there are 50 miles of streets that need to be underground.

Mark will get the committee a copy of the Underground Bylaw so we have a better understanding of it.

Scott raised the question as to how many people would sign up for broadband if offered. (Those who currently cannot use CMLP broadband). It was decided a survey was not needed.

Mark noted that CMLP currently reaches 80% of Concord households but only 15-20% of the 80% subscribe. With the profitability of broadband, it is worthwhile to increase the 80% subscription rate in addition to the last mile. Should some of the free cash return from CMLP broadband be dedicated to the last mile?

Further discussion was about the financial issues, i.e. the cost to the last mile and why HOAs present special challenges and can be expensive to convert to broadband.

Additional data requests of resources: PACE, backlog at CMLP for broadband, do Concord students have sufficient access to broadband?

Public Input/Hearings

Develop work product with definitions of cost and benefits with menu of choices.
Reminder that the public is invited to all of the Taskforce meetings.

Mark suggested that we as a committee should have more visibility with the Long Term Capital Planning Allocation and Envision Concord Committees.

Public comments:

Vince Carlson gave an overview about automated note taking.

Pamela Dritt asked about fiber going into existing conduit and does fiber have its own conduit? She also talked about fiber investment in the town's infrastructure for the future and the need to be tech savvy to adapt to CMLP broadband.

It was moved by David Hesel and seconded by Gail Hire to adjourn. A roll call was taken and by unanimous vote the meeting was adjourned at 8PM.

Fiber Broadband Completion Task Force
Charge

A. Purpose and Background

The purpose of the Fiber Broadband Completion Task Force (FBCTF), as voted by Article 41 of the 2021 Annual Town Meeting, is to study and recommend appropriate solutions for the completion of Concord's fiber optic network, known as Concord Light Broadband, so that this network can offer broadband service throughout the Town.

A recent GIS data analysis found that 5 - 7% of residential parcels are without Fiber Broadband access, either by under-ground or overhead cable, representing 20 - 25% of individual addresses. Residents in affordable housing, condominiums, or apartments may face difficulties connecting to the Town's fiber network.

The FBCC will study alternative approaches to network completion and provide a written report of recommended actions and strategies for the Town Manager and Select Board to consider. The report will present solutions, including possible funding, for three distinct aspects of network completion, or subject areas:

- (a) recommending ways to expedite the installation of fiber-optic telecommunications utility service on the remaining 5 - 7% of Town streets that lacks such service
- (b) exploring barriers to Concord Light Broadband subscription growth
- (c) investigating opportunities for expanding fiber-to-the-home and fiber-to-the-business.

This Task Force will explore the barriers to broadband adoption in a targeted, focused effort. It will revisit the fiber completion strategy on behalf of the community. The report will provide the Light Board, the Select Board, and the Town Manager with information needed to form rational policy decisions on laying fiber to homes and businesses in Concord.

B. Membership

The Fiber Broadband Completion Task Force shall be comprised of seven members appointed by the Select Board. The term of office shall be until February 1, 2022, which is the target date for completion of the Report, unless extended by the Select Board.

Membership shall be as follows:

- One member of the Concord Municipal Light Board, chosen by the Light Board
- One member qualified to represent the business consumers of fiber-based utility services
- One member qualified to represent the real estate community
- One member from a multi-unit dwelling (not currently served by fiber) or Home Owners Association (HOA) board member.
- One member of the PEG Access Advisory Committee Two additional citizens-at-large, with preference given to those with expertise in Broadband or networking

The Task Force shall elect a chair and clerk.

C. Duties and Responsibilities

The Task Force shall seek creative, forward-thinking solutions that acknowledge the existing roles and responsibilities of the Town Manager and staff of the Concord Municipal Light Plant in providing broadband services and completing the broadband deployment of the Town's fiber optic network. This work, for completion of the rollout, will focus exclusively on our fiber. (In particular, the FBCC will not study or explore cellular telephone service solutions or internet access that is based on wireless technologies, such as small cells, 5G, or over-the-air-reception devices.)

The Task Force shall hold at least one public hearing and may conduct surveys, focus groups, or other data collection methods. It is also recommended that Task Force members meet with groups such as the Concord Business Partnership, Economic Vitality Committee, League of Women Voters, the Concord-Carlisle School Superintendent, Council on Aging, and (representatives of the arts and digital media communities)

- The Task Force should research barriers to customer growth prior to developing a plan for expansion. It is recommended that the Task Force shall conduct a citizen survey to ascertain an approximate percentage of citizens who do not want or anticipate using fiber and why.^[1]_{SEP.}
- The Fiber Broadband Task Force shall report their findings and recommendations in writing to the Town Manager and Select Board no later than February 1, 2022. The report shall be publicly available, and the Light Board and interested members of the public should have an opportunity to review and comment on it prior to final submission.

This Report shall be divided into the three aspects of completion set forth in Article 41 and repeated in section A above.

The Task Force may choose to explore additional issues that help to articulate the mission and the business and financial policies for expanding the fiber network and sustaining operations.

(a), "the last 5 – 7 % of streets"

(b), "barriers to subscription growth"

(c): "fiber-to-the-home (FTTH) and fiber-to-the-business (FTTB)" aka the 'last mile'

D. Other Considerations

To foster a free and open discussion of ideas, the Task Force shall comply with the provisions of the Open Meeting Law (including keeping minutes of its deliberations), the Public Records Law, the Conflict-of-Interest Law and all other applicable laws and regulations of the Commonwealth, as well as all relevant Bylaws and Administrative Policies of the Town.