

Town of Winchester Broadband Committee

March 23, 2023 Meeting Minutes

Pending approval of the committee

The Winchester Broadband Committee met on March 23, 2022 at 10:00 AM via ZOOM only.

Attendees: Jim Hochstetter, John Grimmer, Dave Lull, Nancy Johnson. Absent with notice: Gary Engstrom. Absent (due to power outage): Nicolas Newton. Guest: Craig Gowgiel

1. The meeting was called to order at 10:02 and meeting recording was set.
2. Dave moved, John seconded to approve previous meeting minutes from 2/28. Motion carried.
3. Craig Gowgiel introduced himself as an interested Winchester property owner.
4. Old Business:
 - a. Jim received confirmation that the Telecommuter Forward certificate has been signed by the Governor and will be sent to John for posting in the town hall and use on the broadband website.
 - b. No update from Nicolas on current status of mapping with the addition of town taxpayer information. It was noted by John that on the PSC website where all the grants are filed there is a map from (new vendor) Brightspeed indicating where Lumen showed coverage area by census block. Will have Nicholas take a look at it and how it can be incorporated into our map.
 - c. Stakeholder update: Ascension was acquired by Aspirus Health so we will contact them to be added to our stakeholder list. Dave reported that we should be receiving a letter of support from Nicolet College in the next few weeks. John mentioned that he is also working on a list of businesses in Winchester in addition to those we have.
 - d. Dave provided an update on the Calix webinar he attended. Mostly a sales job.
 - e. John had sent out a link to the new Winchester broadband website to the committee for feedback. The website looks great and can be shared with the public. A link will be put on the town website for access. The committee should continue to provide input. It was also discussed to add the powerpoint presentation on the site as well.
 - f. Discussed progress of grant application completion. A new company, Brightspeed is now the vendor for broadband in the Winchester area. The top priority now is to establish communication with them and determine next steps to complete the grant application. Jim will contact them to set-up a meeting as soon as possible.
5. Guest Craig Gowgiel had a few questions for the committee:
 - a. Has the committee considered "non-wired" solutions such as cell towers, Starlink etc and could people get vouchers for such.
 - i. The committee has had communication with SonicNet, the current cell tower provider in Winchester. They are starting other projects in the eastern part of Vilas County. In talking with them, they agreed that with the projects they have going it would be difficult for them to upgrade their service in Winchester in the near future. They wanted to keep in communication on future options. They also mentioned that the challenge for cell coverage in this area is terrain.

- ii. There is a Federal program that offers vouchers for people to help pay for internet access. We will update the website with that information. The committee thanked Craig for his questions.
- 6. Next meeting date was set for 4/22 at 2:00.
- 7. The meeting adjourned at 10:47 and meeting recording saved to the cloud.

Submitted by

Nancy Johnson, Committee Secretary