

May 4, 2023

## Meeting Notes

## Loudon Economic Development Committee Meeting

**Attendees: EDC Members:** Stephen Caine, Tom Blanchette, Jeff Miller, Per Garp. Central NH Regional Planning Commission: Mike Tardiff, Vincent Pagano. Other: Patrick Dumont of Loudon, JD, and Margaret Brown of Mission Broadband

The May 4 meeting of the Loudon Economic Development Committee was began at 5:30pm but was not called to official order as to give Mission Broadband the time they needed to discuss their progress and answer any questions. Margaret Brown and JD of Mission Broadband joined the meeting virtually to provide updates on the work completed since the last meeting of the LEDC. Mission Broadband sent letters to the Internet Service Providers (ISPs) in Loudon requesting coverage information to identify unserved and underserved locations in the town. Since sending the letters they have received three responses from ISPs. TDS acknowledged the letter but did not provide data at the time. Mission Broadband continues to analyze the service gaps in Loudon using the FCC fabric data and the latest data gathered from the request for information to the ISPs. Reiterating a point from the last meeting, JD said that funding from the Federal Government is slated to come in 2024. JD said this funding is known as BEAD funding from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law passed in 2021. 100 million will go to each state and there will be a multiplier that gives more money to the states based on area not served by the stated minimum speed by any ISP. JD explained the process the state must go through to get the BEAD money and how Loudon can be ready to receive the grant money once it starts to be administered by the State of New Hampshire. Mission Broadband will identify where the money can be spent. Mike Tardiff of CNHRPC asked how Loudon can raise its profile with the state, and JD responded that the town should engage in conversation with the state. Mr. Caine asked if information is being shared with providers from other providers. JD said the providers are typically aware of where their competitors serve.

The Loudon EDC members agreed the scope of the work that Mission Broadband is conducting is large and agreed they want to learn more while they still have them under contract. JD said the network that will eventually get built will go over already existing lines. Mr. Blanchette asked if there's a way through the states representatives in Congress to get the NH broadband office filled and to receive funds. JD said NH has hired a consultant to assist with distributing the BEAD funds and again expressed the importance of meeting with a representative from the broadband office or other state officials to discuss the broadband money. Mr. Blanchette suggested inviting State Representative Howard Pearl to an EDC meeting to gauge his knowledge and readiness.

The committee then moved on to the process of acquiring faster internet for the town. JD stated some of the important steps to take are to interview providers, to get plans for expansion if any, and to put out a RFP for 100up/100down mbps for 100% of the town with specification of being open to anything "owned and operated, public/private, municipally owned, or any other ownership type that will meet the needs of Loudon citizens." The RFP will help Loudon get grant ready by doing the foundational work. JD also mentioned the grant money is only for underserved households which will likely not be enough to get the whole town to 100% served by 100up/100down. There are other options like local funding, ARPA, TIF, investors, and other capital funding to give better internet throughout town. Before money from the government comes, ISPs would come to the town and fund the infrastructure build. Loudon does have competition between ISPs, but the speeds are limited. Another consideration all ISPs must consider is profitability. Stacking capital from multiple entities helps increase profitability and return on investment for ISPS, helping attract them to the town to build infrastructure. Mr. Blanchette asked for a

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realistic timeline to submit an RFP, with consideration of getting stack money for 2024. JD said first is to wait the remainder of the 30 days for ISPs to respond, then interview, look at cost for RFP. The RFP would go out and take 6 weeks to get responses, 2 weeks to score, and then discuss the options. Then bring the best proposal to the table. Mr. Blanchette said the EDC should determine by June if that is the route the EDC wants to take. The full timeline is approximately 3 months. In the best case the EDC gets all the information the EDC wants from an interview. Mike Tardiff said the best-case scenario is traction in the interviews to be front of the line with ISPs. JD gave an anecdote about a Maine ISP that pursued expansion of symmetrical gigabyte internet in parts of Maine and said that an EDC making its wants known to an ISP is as impactful as residents in the town reaching out, which is a factor ISPs consider for expansion of services. JD said there are public private models that work well. Mission Broadband will see when providers can meet and schedule meetings.

JD then said he would give a review of the technology underlying the internet to the committee. DSL is copper wire and digital signals carried over this wire deteriorate over distance. The speed of DSL transmission cannot be increased. The next step up is coaxial (coax), this is the cable that carries a TV signal. Fiber feeds to nodes on a pole, and the coax goes from the pole to the home. This means in many cases fiber is already on the lines and needs to only be expanded to the home through a fiber cable. Coax is capable of high download speeds up to a gigabyte, but upload speeds are capped at 35mbps. This is important because some business uses, such as video calling, require fast upload speeds to function effectively. The next step is fiber. Docsis 3 & 4 is a telecommunications standard that can provide high speed symmetrical internet. Fiber speeds are symmetrical, which means the download and upload speeds are the same. The only limiting factor is end technology. Fiber speeds are unlimited, effectively meaning they are "future proof." The other limit is over-subscription. Other non-wired options are fixed wireless, which requires line of site. The old version of satellite is point in the sky, such as DirecTV. The bandwidth was low and the latency high. Newer technology satellites are low-orbit satellites with lots of units close together so bandwidth is improved. The FCC does not consider wireless technologies to be a broadband solution under the parameters to distribute BEAD money. The tech talk then concluded and JD and Margaret left. The meeting was then called to official order at 6:25 PM. Tom Blanchette motioned to approve the minutes as they stand, Jeff Miller seconded. Mr. Blanchette introduced Patrick Dumont of Loudon who was interested in joining the EDC. The EDC moved to the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) Project Priority List update. Vincent Pagano described the CEDS for those who were not familiar. Stephen Caine met with Brenda Pearl, Loudon Town Administrator, and proposed several projects. One of the proposed projects to be added to the list was rehabilitation of the recreational fields. The EDC moved to another business. There was a reminder to call in the representatives and senators. Next meeting set for June 1 at 5:30 PM. Mr. Blanchette motioned to adjourn; Jeff Miller seconded. The EDC adjourned at 6:34pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Vincent Pagano