

April 6, 2023

## Meeting Notes

## Loudon Economic Development Committee Meeting

**Attendees: EDC Members:** Rodney Phillips, Stephen Caine, and Tom Blanchette. Central NH Regional Planning Commission: Mike Tardiff, Vincent Pagano. Other: Per Garp of Loudon

The April 6 Meeting of the Loudon Economic Development Committee began at 5:32 pm. The members of the EDC considered the March 2, 2023 minutes for approval. Upon a motion by Tom Blanchette and a second by Rodney Phillips, the March 2, 2023 meeting minutes were unanimously approved. Per Garp, a Loudon Resident, attended the meeting as a guest and expressed interest to join.

Mike Tardiff introduced Mission Broadband's presenters to the Loudon EDC via Zoom video call. JD from Mission Broadband introduced himself and his colleague, Margaret Brown to the EDC. JD explained Mission Broadband will be sending out a request for information (RFI) letter to broadband providers that requests information on broadband coverage in Loudon. JD went on to explain the different rounds of funding available from the state. JD mentioned part of the goal is to get Loudon ready for when the funding is ready. JD explained the funding will be calculated in part from the final round of FCC Broadband mapping that is slated to be released in June. JD spoke on the funding from the US Department of Commerce under the BEAD Program. BEAD is the Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment program. Every state is applying for BEAD funding, and each state will receive 100 million in funding added to a multiplier that is calculated from the final version of the FCC Broadband map in June 2023. Stephen Caine asked about challenges to the map. JD explained anyone can challenge the accuracy of the data from the website. Mr. Phillips noted although an address may have access to the internet speeds displayed by the FCC, they may not be seeing those speeds because of their internet package. Stephen Caine asked if Mission Broadband intended to provide fiber internet availability to Loudon. JD said they are doing a gap analysis and communicating with providers that will be able to provide fiber availability to Loudon. Mr. Caine asked Mission Broadband about running fiber to an apartment as an example, and how a service provider will bridge the gap from building to consumer. JD said that would require running fiber through the building. Mr. Caine asked if that is a conversation that would be good to have with a provider, and JD confirmed. Mike Tardiff said we are "waving the flag" for Loudon to get providers to come first, and then to open the conversation about getting fiber to different types of customers and building types. Mission Broadband then thanked the Board for its time and said they had to go. The Zoom video call ended. Building on the conversation about bringing the fiber internet infrastructure to Loudon, Mr. Caine said in the Loudon Village all wires are underground and brought up a concern about retrofitting in the area for fiber.

The EDC moved on to discussing the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy. Vincent Pagano explained the CEDS again, and Mike Tardiff emphasized the type of project suitable for a CEDS is

along-term capital project. Tom Blanchette suggested a Highway Department Garage be included. Mr. Tardiff explained having a project in the CEDS can help strengthen the case for congressional funding. Mr. Blanchette mentioned CIP projects would be a good fit. Mr. Caine suggested several long-term issues that would fit in the CEDS fall under transportation such as public transit accessibility and solutions. Mr. Tardiff gave an example of the Capital Area Transit (CAT) expansion. The committee spoke on public transit challenges to rural areas, and Mr. Tardiff mentioned there are studies about micro transit being done. Mr. Caine spoke on attempted development on route 106 and a conversation ensued about general workforce availability in New Hampshire. Mr. Phillips said the environment for attracting and maintaining workers in New Hampshire is difficult. The potential new member, Per Garp, asked if utility

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line burying is something that would fit in the CEDS. Mr. Phillips said in Concord lines are required to run underground, but mentioned line burying is more likely to be done when a road is being completely redone due to cost. Mr. Blanchette mentioned that currently, supply chain issues have led to a bottleneck on ground-mounted transformers, which are required for utility line burying. Mr. Caine asked that continued discussion with Mission Broadband about line burying be added to the agenda for May.

Speaking on economic development, Mr. Caine mentioned how difficult it is to run a business and use the locale to support that business, particularly in a rural town like Loudon. Mr. Caine asked if there is infrastructure built to help people get to Loudon and how to make local businesses accessible to a wider consumer group. Mr. Tardiff said that making land available can help attract business, such as with the ERZs in Loudon currently. A conversation about the potential for the racetrack as a business hub if the NASCAR race ever stopped coming to New Hampshire. Mr. Blanchette said the racetrack is the only place in Loudon that has the infrastructure to support big businesses.

Mr. Caine asked for any other business. Mr. Tardiff mentioned Per Garp will need to be appointed to the EDC officially. The next meeting was set for the Loudon Town Hall on May 4 at 5:30 pm. Stephen Caine asked for a motion to adjourn if there was no other business, Rodney Phillips motioned to adjourn, and Tom Blanchette seconded. The meeting of the Loudon EDC concluded at 6:14 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Vincent Pagano