

## Select Board, Broadband Committee, and Finance Committee Meeting with Comcast

Monday, February 26, 2018, 7 PM

**In attendance:** Select Board Chair Sarah Reynolds, Select Board members Beth Bandy and Marguerite Willis; Broadband Committee Chair Bob Handsaker, Broadband Committee members Cheryl Handsaker, Trevor Mackie, Ken Hall, and Sean Neil; Finance Committee Chair Rich Filoramo, Finance Committee members Ron Smith, Lynn Hathaway, Massachusetts Broadband Institute (MBI)'s Peter Larkin, and the Greenfield Recorder's Diane Broncaccio

**Comcast representatives:** Eileen Leahy – Sr. Manager Gov't relations, Dan Glanville – VP of Gov't relations, Jim Bitzas – Regional Director of Construction

1. The meeting was called to order at 7:03 pm.
2. Dan Glanville introduced the Comcast team present from western New England, located out of Berlin, CT. Comcast has had a presence since the 1970s. Comcast is working on their 36<sup>th</sup> western MA town, now with the most recent addition of Montgomery. They've entered into a private-public partnership with 9 communities and have been looking at additional communities. Comcast commended the Broadband Committee's diligence with their many different options. Comcast too would like to present an option.
3. The make-ready has been more cumbersome, expensive, and timely. Because Comcast hasn't done a true engineering analysis, they estimate that 75% coverage will cost an additional \$1.1M over the grant funds available and asked if the Town is responsible for subsidizing that cost? Where do the funds come from? They are looking at the legality of it. Comcast has not entertained that as a business model. They have video payback in some situations. They explained what a franchise agreement is, exclusive of pricing and channels. It is similar to the cable model in the 1970s that required public educational and local access programming. They've never had a Town pay them for broadband expansion.
4. Comcast has spoken with Worthington and Middlefield.
5. Cheryl Handsaker commented that we have always heard that the last 20% is the most expensive, that \$25k per mile at the low, \$50k per mile on average. In a less rural build, the biggest costs are considered to be long drops. A big unknown is the pole make-ready. Maybe not unknowns but changes in the scope of the project are what drives up the cost. Examples might also be railroads who have set and established rules. This federal property has uniform construction requirements. What drives the cost of crossing a river varies, environmental impact and the actual cost of the construction, what it would cost to get across. Bob Handsaker brings this up because there are 3 utility crossings across the river.
6. Discussing make-ready, they agree with Cheryl that adding 40% more poles to the make-ready costs would increase the cost by 40%. Comcast feels that although the pole count may be off, basing the price on cost per mile has shown to be accurate enough for an estimate.
7. Comcast left at 7:37 pm. Comcast hasn't provided a proposal in the FGP for Charlemont. MBI recommended Comcast propose an option to Charlemont. The bond authorization was passed under the guise that it was at 100%. According to Peter, Charlemont will be paying rates that they are competing for in Boston to ensure they stay at a publicly posted rate, through the Department of TeleCommunications who isn't able to veto.

8. Wi-Valley offered 100% but not the broadband speeds. Sean Neill is looking at some solutions to get to the 100%.
9. If the State comes through with this maximum out of pocket for our make-ready the Town will be on budget. 61 route miles includes a lot of long driveways. The Broadband Committee is asking for the Department of Conservation and Recreation to contribute to the last two miles that extend to the State Forest.
10. The meeting was adjourned at 8:01 pm

Respectfully submitted by Peg Dean

Draft documents until approved

Documents viewed:

Comcast business cards for Eileen Leahy – Sr. Manager Gov't relations, Dan Glanville – VP of Gov't relations, Jim Bitzas – Regional Director of Construction

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