**MINUTES**



**Town of Vinalhaven**

**Board of Selectmen**

Public Hearing

Smith Hokanson Memorial Hall

Thursday, June 10, 2021

5:00 pm

Those present: Selectmen Eric Gasperini, Pam Alley, Donald Poole, and Jacob Thompson; and Deputy Town Clerk Elizabeth Bunker

Also present:

Kendra Jo Grindle (Isl. Inst., Remote)

Gabe McPhail

Matt Jablonski

Janann Sherman

Ted Dyer

Amy Lear

Elin Elisofon

Jean Thompson

Lucian Berg

Marie Pollard

Marjorie Stratton

Dan Cross

Suzanne Cross

Jill Oakes

Jennifer Clements

Jim Boone

Merry Boone

Pam Johnson

Ed Hirst

Walt Day

Hollis Hopkins

Don Young

Patrick Shane

Jeff Chilles

Aviva Rahmani

Josie Iselin

Sharon Philbrook

Walter Grischuk

Shawn Chilles

Patrick Trainor

Carla Harris

Faye Grant

Barb Philbrook

Colleen Conlan

Kathi Young

Johnny McCarthy

Daniel Paul

Marcia Cleveland

5 Unknown

Eric Gasperini opened the meeting at 5pm and set some ground rules. Individuals would be given three minutes to speak so as to not dominate the floor, and those wishing to speak were asked to use the microphones provided.

Gabe McPhail opened with an overview of the committee’s work to date and the campaigns timeline.

Questions and comments included:

What about partnering with FIEC? *Answer: FIEC was approached, but they did not feel they could take on the burden.*

What about working with current providers? *Answer: Consolidated was asked to provide an estimate for the project, and they came up with $3.3 million.*

What was going to provide the service from Rockland?

What about cellular and satellite options?

Could internet speeds be increased? *Yes, but most are satisfied with the service they receive. Mofi Network routers and Starlink may be a wireless option.*

With the increasing reliability of cellular/wireless technology, running a fiber to every home will become obsolete.

What about people on a fixed income (social security) or the elderly, how will they manage an increase on their taxes?

There are a lot of other projects going on currently, and coming in the near future - bridges, paving, firetrucks, sidewalks, etc. - that we could use this money on. This is something that we do not *have* to add to the tax base.

The town has a lot of needs and wants, and this is a want.

What about businesses?

Who will do the maintenance and service?

There is a lot of federal money available to build out infrastructure, but there must be “community consensus” before funds can be requested.Several comments along the lines of “This is a gamble we can’t take.”

Many of the telephone poles would have to be changed out because there is currently no room to run another line.

Broadband would be good for school kids to be able to work remotely, or telemedicine for the elderly to be able to stay in their homes. *The school provided hotspots so all school kids could participate in remote learning.*

There are bigger issues that would be thought of before broadband: Affordable housing and road maintenance.

Do not put the burden on the elderly. They will not use broadband and could use the money on groceries or medicine. Broadband is a luxury they cannot afford.

Does Vinalhaven even qualify as “underserved”? How many other towns are less served than Vinalhaven, and would receive federal funds before Vinalhaven? Then what would we do if we did not receive funding?

What would have to be the customer base to make it a viable option? *As part of the broadband study, Axion assumes a 70% take rate for those out of town, and 50% in town.* What if it is less than 50%?

What if the project costs more than $5 million?

Were wireless options researched as part of the Broadband study? Why run wires when wireless options are becoming faster and faster?

$5 million is the start-up estimate. What about the annual operating, maintenance, equipment, and billing fees? *($400,000 is the annual operating estimate)*

Next steps: The Selectmen will continue discussion at their next regular meeting on June 15, 2021.

*Respectfully Submitted,*

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*Elizabeth Bunker, Deputy Town Clerk*