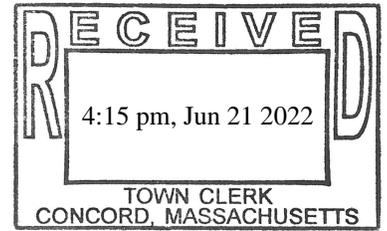


Fiber Broadband Completion Task Force - MINUTES

Meeting Date: Jan 13, 2022



Videos can be found at Minuteman Media Network Youtube Channel:
<https://www.youtube.com/c/MinutemanMediaNetwork>

Note – none of these URLs links directly to this night’s meeting, which is apparently not yet published.
A recording is available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=plsQmgG73ZI>

Concord Fiber Broadband Task Force
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=plsQmgG73ZI>
Held virtually via Zoom, beginning at 6:30 pm.

A recording is available at: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCUk6r-j8hFwin1lwht-RViA>

Roll call Attendance

Mark Howell	Present
Gordon Brockway	Present
David Hesel	Present
Scott Hopkinson	Present
Gail Hire	Present

Other attendees:
Joan Densberger
Karlen Reed
Terri Ackerman

Mark discussing communication with Select Board
Discussion related to the Feb 1, 2022 completion.
Not ready to be done
Discover permanent facts
Beginning to approach a consensus on direction and recommendations.

6:32 meeting called to order.

Not meeting next week on Jan 20, 2022.
Will meet on Jan 27, 2022

Language around the deadline driven by warrant articles that Town Meeting could act on this year.
We decided that we could not make a recommendation in order to present action to Town Meeting.

Gail – ARPA funding and COVID-related Federal government funding are time sensitive, wanted the Task Force to focus on funding possibilities. Related to town meeting, if something was developed the deadline would give time for folks to talk about it ahead of the town meeting.

Mark – our intention is to move quickly and the intention and primary charge was to move this quickly and bring to conclusion in time for town meeting and not creating a standing committee.

Mark presented the memo drafted to the select board regarding the extension of the work by the fiber completion task force. (see attached draft before edits made during the meeting)

Terri asked if we are confident in the June 30 date ?

Gail responded that we do have a draft and are making great progress.

Scott – commend best case on completion of his section.

Gordon – asked light plant for list and description of missing streets.

Mark –we do have a way to chart a path forward without the details related to a lot of fiber construction. We can suggest what is needed to be done. That is what the memo essentially reflects. We can create enough knowledge and insight to provide recommendations.

This would enable existing boards to make decisions relating to priorities and investment. Mark's view this becomes one of the things that have to consider among the priorities and the broader mandate. Scott agrees.

There is an implied ask of the five of us, for a further commitment of additional time or appointed or re-appointed to serve.

Scott expressed willing to continue to invest time in making this a success.

David – willing to continue. It should roll out to all the town, but the way to finance is through increased subscription participation by the 75% of the population that is currently served.

Mark once we have a cost to increase the coverage, we might propose a process for making the decision to how to accomplish the goal. These alternative might allow the goals to be accomplished in short, medium and long term.

Gordon willing to extend his service to town meeting. Cautions about vastly expanding the financial footprint. Recognize that the current plan for adding new subscribers is constrained in a number of ways. The priority scheme in place will not ever solve certain problems such as negotiation log jams etc. The problem is classes of people that are not served and might never be served. Don't necessarily agree that there should be a bond issue to fund additional rollout. Instincts are to find opportunities and deficiencies to allow for expanding the broadband initiative.

Mark – we should be working to have a report that addresses article 41 and publish the report by the end of the fiscal year.

Gordon: We are presenting in town meeting in April. Appointment ends in Feb, should need an exception.

Mark any further discussion required ? – consensus – no.

Next: Mark: preparation submission for annual town report.

Scott discussed if the task force submitted to the annual report book. Brief discussion with Mark.

Gordon had a couple of recommendations. Who is going to initiate and manage the capital planning.

Gordon suggests that the budget process originates in the enterprise, goes to fin-com and is approved by the consent agenda for town meeting.

Discussion about the role of the Town Manager being the general manger of the light plant.

Mark reviewed section relating to: Reaches 93% of parcels but only 80% of residential and business.

Terri Ackerman – interesting discussion.

There is one other consideration in the ARPA and infrastructure.

\$5.6 M is coming to the town and half is already in the bank.

You folks might want to attend the Selectboard Meeting on

Jan 31 – we are having a forum where committees and citizens will weigh in .

First part of the meeting – will be description what can quality such as

Roads, water and activities where there has been lost revenue.

Should the fiber be paid by the users or should the town pay for it.

Scott again discussed the three phases

- 1) Under served solution
- 2) Cost of addressing under served
- 3) Possible funding sources to address #2.

Gordon – it is not within the light board to make the decision on the investment of ARPA funds.

It was generally agreed (Teri, Gordon, Scott) that this is a town meeting decision and priority.

Gordon – there is an opportunity to invest in the broadband to create a return that turns into dividend.

That dividend can be used to improve life for all Concordians.

Mark discussed about the increasing priority of broadband

Now explicitly named.

Where is the equivalent of Comcast's Internet Essentials for Concord Broadband. ?

Scott – discussed that concord broadband enabled working from home and allowing to pay taxes and utilities in Concord. The broadband enabled a significant investment from the household, without with some manner of connectivity we (Scott and wife) could not afford to be in Concord and pay property taxes.

Terri Ackerman very quickly – the money is a once of the lifetime.

\$5.9M received but had \$29.0 M in requests from the town.

Mark discussed the original smart grid authorization of \$4.5 M (note actual spent \$4.0) plus the \$1.9M capital.

Mark indicated that the annual report would be accepted.

Mark – those were the things that consumed his week (e.g. annual report and letter to select board).

Mark open the floor to make any additional comments to the content.

If not then we should discuss the process for the next two weeks.

Gail – definition of fiber so people know what folks are discussing.

Discussion of if wireless can be considered.

Gail – indicated the goal of the charge and focus was on optical connectivity . The article was focused on fiber solution.

David and Gail discussing complex situation for Concord Greene, would you look at wireless as a potential compromise. Gail indicated that it would be up to the landlord or individual.

Gail: Just as we get electricity, fiber should be offered in the same way as electricity.

David discussed the possibly of a 5G local tower to allow access within Concord Greene.

Gail – fiber is safer, better, future proof technology.

Gordon – indicated that the select board was more restrictive by eliminating wireless.

Mark proposes : Our primary charge it to analyze completion of a fiber network connection eliminating the wireless approaches. Given the time allowed for the committee is to focus on fiber and analyze the best we can and the cost associated and the ascending cost for the last per centage.

Mark discussed the 3rd party problem (such as HOA or landlord) to get over the barrier then it may be appropriate to allude to those solutions.

Discussion about focus on the core technology.

Fiber vs. wireless solutions (including microwave)

David – Concord Greene is doing paving in next 60-90 days.

In another four months they are locked out for a very long time (on the order 15-20 years).

Gordon - if we could get Concord Broadband to a few places in Concord Greene, there is a window.

Gordon is speaking for the broadband and CMLP – would like to grab that business.

Mark – Gail keeps raising the future proof of fiber – there is no limit.

Wireless spectrum is quite limited. For example, ATT and Verizon are curtailing 5G at airports because of possible interference with flight altimeters.

Gail – the reason brought this to town meeting, getting the fiber to the homes is a tough question but it is the governmental obligation to get to the fiber to the home. That is why Gail was motivated to bring the article to town. Municipal owned network that offered the best solution to the people.

Mark – interesting that broadband is becoming looked at as infrastructure.

Like road that are owned by the municipality. Their value is that the roads go everywhere. When we talk about what it takes to close those gaps, 25% of the premises that we have in town do not have access at all. Really we are only servicing only 25% of the 75% do have access Have we gotten to the point the flywheel of benefits.

Gordon, identify cost and to solve. Gordon thinks that the cost, the major impediment is not cost. It's who pays. If we win APRPA money, then the dollars are not the solve the problem

Scott disagrees – if CMLP broadband would offer to put into Concord Greene as an example, then Concord Greene would accept with no expense to the property owner.

Mark we have made decisions about the payback for investments and operating policies to permit the light plant to be more interested in making those investments in order to achieve wider deployment.

Mark- once it is framed to getting to a larger number of accessed homes allows us to consider the solution.

David – we don't get snow plowing, we don't get services that we might as we pay taxes for. As a board and individual on the board, does it enhance the value of the community, does the community want it or do the community want it. Requires a 75% vote by the HOA to make investment for EV charging stations.

Mark – mention it is 8:05 PM

Helpful to review the two communications to keep our focus.

Mark suggest all of us do some writing and begin to share at the upcoming meeting. This will allow us to create this report. There will be other perspectives once we start the review process.

Gordon, back to the political vs. the financial, we could translate the \$200K to 8 or so uptake, that that pushes the multi-unit to the end of the line if we are going to come up with the financial support.

Mark- suggest that put conduit under streets at least to every place where you have to cross the street.

It was suggested that a recommendation for the report could include a proposal that CMLP write to property owners and request that if paving is being considered, let CMLP put conduit in the right of ways.

Scott moves to close the meeting subject to public comment.

Terri thought tonight's discussion was excellent. Not clear that we would finish in June .
Can put us on agenda for Jan 20 to extend to June 30

Scott moves that we appear to the select board to extend to June 30.

(note two motions)

Teri will put it on the Jan 20, have to be there (not available virtually) at the gym.

Public Comment:

Joan Densberger – this is an excellent discussion

Will not be able to attend

Teaching class at BU in public health law on Thursday.

There is 2019 article in Journal of Law, Medicine and Ethics “Broadband access as a public health issue: The Role of Law in Expanding Broadband Access and Connecting Underserved Communities for Better Health Outcomes” is an important article.

Highlights the value and importance of broadband.

Importance of having the community completely connected.

Thank you all for your work

Mark – one of the thing the fiber network carries is all police and fire radio communications, it is a day and night 24 x7 – basic life function
Nothing to do with browsing the internet.

Motion to adjourn

Scott moved to adjourn
Gordon seconded.

Mark Howell	Aye
Gordon Brockway	Aye
David Hesel	Aye
Scott Hopkinson	Aye
Gail Hire	Aye

Draft of letter to Select board regarding the timing of the task force.

Starting below =====

Fiber Broadband Completion Task Force – Annual Town Report Draft for 1/13/22 Meeting

Fiber Broadband Completion Task Force:

- Gordon Brockway - Light Board Representative
- Scott Hopkinson - PEG Access Advisory Committee Representative
- David Hesel - HOA (Home Owners Association) Representative
- Gail Hire – Citizen at large Representative
- Mark Howell – Citizen at large Representative, Task Force Chairperson

The Fiber Broadband Completion Task Force (FBCTF) was created by the passage of Article 41 at the 2021 Annual Town Meeting. The article required that the Select Board appoint a citizen committee to conduct a targeted, focused effort to study and recommend possible solutions and funding sources for expediting completion of the Town’s fiber optic communications network. The task force is required to prepare a report in time for the 2022 Annual Town Meeting.

The Select Board approved a detailed charge and appointed the members of the Task Force in August 2021. The Task Force immediately recognized that the scope is large and the time to work was very short. Task Force has met almost every week from September on to study the fiber network, explore barriers to Concord Light Broadband subscription growth and investigate opportunities to expand the fiber network.

The Task Force defined four specific focus areas to study. First, the “last 5-7% of streets”. This looks at the gaps in fiber construction: where there is CMLP electric service but no Concord Light Broadband service. The fiber network currently reaches about 93 percent of parcels, but only about 80% of residential and business units in the Town of Concord. The goal is to understand the scale and scope of these unserved areas. Once defined and categorized, logical completion plans may be developed. Constructing a fully Town-wide fiber optic network is a significant investment that would take multiple years. As such, considerations of how to incorporate this work into the Town’s capital planning process will be addressed in the report.

The second focus area is “Barriers to Subscription Growth.” Most of the Town is already served by the fiber network. Yet estimates are that only about 25 percent of the potential subscribers actually do use the service. As an enterprise operated by CMLP, it is prudent to understand the potential demand and the inhibitors to usage that exist. The Task Force is examining methods for tracking demand, customer trends, and marketing opportunities.

The third focus area is investigating opportunities to expand “Fiber-to-the-Home (FTTH) and Fiber-to-the-business (FTTB),” also known as the ‘last mile.’ Some parcels are served by fiber from the right-of-way, but potential customers on these premises have additional obstacles to installation. Rental units, condominiums and many small businesses fall into this category. Some of the restriction on installation has to do with policy choices made by Concord Light. In other places, offering simultaneous or coordinated installations to multiple customers could quickly expand FTTH and FTTB. The Task Force will work to identify such issues and consider if changes might be advisable.

Lastly, it is widely recognized that the existence of a municipally-owned fiber optic network is an asset to the community. Like other Town Enterprise funds, the responsibility to establish the goals and implement a set of governing policies rests with the citizens. The Task Force is collecting a list of potential policy alternatives and will include them with the report along with options and/or recommendations for implementation of ongoing governance.

Once the Task Force has created its initial report in 2022, it will create opportunities for review and comment by engaging with the Town Manager, Light Board, Select Board and citizens at large. The results of this work are intended to be advisory to these existing entities.