

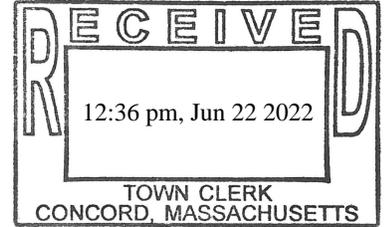
Fiber Broadband Completion Task Force - APPROVED MINUTES

Meeting Date: April 21, 2022

Chair: Mark Howell

Concord Fiber Broadband Task Force
Held virtually via Zoom, beginning at 6:30 pm.

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



Roll call Attendance

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

Start at 6:38 PM

Conducting the meeting under authority for virtual meetings.
The meeting is being recorded.

Scott will clerk.

Pending Minutes – February 24, 2022 Clerk: S Hopkinson

Sent April 7 2022
DRAFT_Minutes_Fiber_Broadband_Completion_Task_Force_2022__02_24_TC.docx

Mark reviewed Feb 24 minutes.
Scott moves that we accept.
Gordon seconds.
David was absent from the minutes.

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

Pending Minutes – April 7, 2022 Clerk: S Hopkinson

Sent April 7,2022
DRAFT_Minutes_Fiber_Broadband_Completion_Task_Force_2022_04_07_TC.docx

Mark reviewed Feb 24 minutes.
Gordon moves that we accept.
David seconds.

Gordon Brockway	Aye
David Hesel	Aye
Mark Howell	Aye

Scott Hopkinson	Aye
Gail Hire	Aye

Chairs Report:

One future meeting next Thursday.

Generally conclude discussion about what updates we want to see to the draft report based on comments and other considerations.
No particular updates from the chairs breakfast.

We may want to be thinking about what we might be wanting to do by way of recommendations for the draft report.

Mark wanted to have each committee member comment on the draft report or comments.

Gordon: Is there a formal way we that we would acknowledge the emails we have received.
Mark discussed the forwarded emails.
Most were about what planning for specific needs.

Mary Harman – comments in email.
Gordon says we could answer the emails.
David: Mary is about to become a member of the select board.

Scott – pointed out that one of our early discussions was the possibility of this fiber completion or similar committee continue to advise the specifically the broadband business.

Scott pointed out that the current Green Card volunteer still includes the “**Cable Advisory Committee**” for example.

Mark discussed his view, he would be inclined to take a wait and see. There are certain things to do such as the ARPA funding.

Gail discussed taking advantage of infrastructure funds and ARPA, we could suggest that a committee could help identify opportunities.

Scott discussed that as a direct result of the Fiber Completion Committee there was a change of the operation and behavior. The fact that this article driven Fiber Completion Committee. The very simple way is to have a regular basis a news letter, this is where we are and this is what we are doing. This would put in front of people and keep it interest.

Scott: Presented tables that might be useful for tracking the business.

Concord Fiber Completion Task Force April 14, 2022

Recommended Subscriber Review Dashboard for Light Board Meetings.

Long Term Trends (yearly data spanning life of Concord Broadband)

	Year	Commercial				Residential				Cumulative			
		Adds	Drops	Net	Total at end of period	Adds	Drops	Net	Total at end of period	Adds	Drops	Net	Total at end of period
Actual	2013												
Actual	2014												
Actual	2015												
Actual	2016												
Actual	2017												
Actual	2018												
Actual	2019												
Actual	2020												
Actual	2021												
Forecast	2022												
Forecast	2023												
Forecast	2024												
Forecast	2025												
Forecast	2026												
Forecast	2027												
Forecast	2028												
Forecast	2029												
Forecast	2030												
Forecast	2031												
Forecast	2032												
Forecast	2033												

NOTE: once actual have been populated – updated to this information should take less that one hour per quarter to update.

Recommended Subscriber Review Dashboard for Light Board Meetings.

Medium term Trends (quarterly data for last 3 and next 2 years)

	Year	Month (end)	Commercial				Residential				Cumulative			
			Adds	Drops	Net	Total at end of period	Adds	Drops	Net	Total at end of period	Adds	Drops	Net	Total at end of period
Actual	2019	March												
Actual	2019	June												
Actual	2019	Sept												
Actual	2019	Dec												
Actual	2020	March												
Actual	2020	June												
Actual	2020	Sept												
Actual	2020	Dec												
Actual	2021	March												
Actual	2021	June												
Actual	2021	Sept												
Actual	2021	Dec												
Forecast / Outlook	2022	March												
Forecast	2022	June												
Forecast	2022	Sept												
Forecast	2022	Dec												
Forecast	2022	March												
Forecast	2022	June												
Forecast	2022	Sept												
Forecast	2022	Dec												

NOTE: once actual have been populated – updated to this information should take less that one hour per quarter to update. (both sheets)

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Gordon: Town meeting is in a matter of days. It is too late to have something in front of town meeting. If things don't change, there is a potential a warrant in the next town meeting CY2023 that advocates for universal access.

Mark – discussion if Article 41 was an endorsement for Universal Access. Article 41 was to study the limitations to universal access.

Mark indicated that we should understand why the slow down that started in 2020 was a result of Covid or a saturation situation.

Mark – begin to understand the debt structure was not appropriate.

- 1) Pay back too fast. Capital value come from loan and becomes capital equipment value with a life of twenty years or more.
- 2) Amount of money and loan, (e.g. \$1.9M loan when the broadband had outstanding debt of less than \$1m).

Gordon mentioned that Peggy Briggs had found another error that had a substantial impact on the P&L and financial model of the CMLP power side of the business.

Mark discussed the schedule for repayment of cash owed to the electric company and is able to be handled by the CLMP director if not the CMLP board. Mark suggests that our recommendation should

include how the debt structure was handled and make a forward looking recommendation for broadband.

Scott reminds folks that this repayment schedule show up to \$300K per year which is a considerable drag on the growth on the broadband.

Mark indicated that the repayment was originally made for \$995,000 has been paid back over the seven years. Scott pointed out that it was very difficult to reconcile the load and pay back the amount.

Scott mentioned that Matt Cummings was looking into this \$1.9M loan and will get back to the committee on this subject.

Mark –does think we should enhance two aspects in the study:

- 1) Handling the debt and capitalization and be made crystal clear.
- 2) Check back in a year, if this business has not returned to its growth rate (about 195 installs) this might be cause for careful study by a follow-on group or team.

Karlen Reed: 83 Whits End Road

The following should be looked at to provide details as to the \$1.9M loan that was put in place.

Sept 17, 2019 minutes CMLP board. Minutes
CY 2018 calendar year financial and management letter.

Mark also spoke with Wendy Rovelli – chair of light board and on financier committee.
Wendy did not think they had a chance to look into this.

David – in 2022 if in a year (2023) if the growth rate of 195 per year is not observed, then the average growth rate for 2017, 2018 and 2019. Should we put something in that if the 195 is not achieved then how town universal access can be achieved.

Mark indicated that we identified 6100 served properties. So getting back to 195 then this is getting back to business as usual. If we can't get to that level, this might indicate a limit or saturation of the growth of Concord Broadband.

David – if someone revisits this in a year and if the growth rate is below 195 then the take rate may have been saturated. What do we want to recommend take place.

Mark the other way to understand the backlog, because there has always been a backlog indicates that the backlog delay can be an indicator is latent backlog.

Gordon – discussed logistics of multi-step queue. Systems analysis will always ask where you want the queue to exist. The installation limit creating a backlog, it obscures what is going on in the business.

David pointed out that a competitor can do better.

Gail – appreciate the sentiment that there should be goals, the numbers may be somewhat arbitrary. Pandemic and other impacts do affect operations. Gail does not feel there is a specific recommendation related to 195 per year as there are too many variables.

David, it appears there are more resources to run the business and one would anticipate that the increased resources would result in improved performance. Mark commented that what would be reasonable is return to historical norms. Short staffing occurred consistent with the timing of the pandemic. If it does return to normal, what does it mean we can do?

David discussing with Mary Hartman, we are beyond the point of putting in conduit, would 5G be the answer relative to Concord Greene.

Scott discussed fixed wireless alternatives and that even now on cell phone 100 mbit/sec is possible.

Mark – discussed hybrid solutions that are a mix of wired, optical and wireless solutions. When we talk about the last 100 foot problem this is evolving and always needs to be solved.

Gordon, one of the frustrations because of the backlog and priority of easiest cases first. (note: the model from the beginning was designed to get to cash neutral and repay the loans). Getting to profitability / cash neutral was a high priority for the beginning of the business. The first installs were focus on the easiest (lowest cost) to install and may not be representative of the full population of installations.

The organization does not have knowledge in a complex MDU. At some point that is going to have to change.

Scott suggested that the CMLP broadband do a pilot to confirm the operation and reliability of direct bury optical cable.

Mark indicated that this could be done at the Prescott (Concord Muse) from the CMLP plant to be a pilot for vibratory plow.

70 Beharrell has ONT with four users per ONT in a telecom room.

Gail we should make some recommendations that some pilot projects, pick an MDU. Chattanooga started in 2010 and have the entire community wired. We should encourage the telecom folks to get started to see how the pilot programs work out relative to the weather.

Mark – we should answer what should happen next would be important.

Grants we determined we should make recommendations on what might take place.

Milestones, and specific goals.

Standardizing long term data presented so that trends can be seen.

Reset expectations on debt and capitalization plans.

There may be other technology solutions and installation that should be piloted
(such as direct bury and vibratory plow)

Jason Bulger: Comments:

Jason provided the following notes from the call: "I expanded the bullet points I had to include a little more context." Jason Bulger

- I reviewed the executive summary of the draft report at this week's department meeting and outlined the low-hanging fruit mentioned:
 - Reaching out to MDUs
 - Providing real estate agents with promotional materials
 - Coordinating with the engineering and highway department to align conduit installs with road work
 - Creating more marketing materials
 - Reaching out to nearby customers when doing an install
 - Letting people know who may have fiber access but don't have service
 - Exploring the notion of fiber hoods
- We continue to look at grants and alternative funding sources.
 - An example is the Concord/Acton rec, which is looking to build fiber from CMLP to the Acton Public Safety Building.
 - When we got a quote for the necessary 12-strand, we also got a quote for 96-strand fiber that would allow for additional backbone capacity for about 3 miles.
- We have several highly qualified candidates for the Telecom Director role, and Light Plant Director Dave Wood and I strongly agree that we don't just want someone with a technical background in fiber, but someone with a strong business sense and who can make operational improvements to increase efficiency.
- Regarding the backlog, if staffing levels are maintained throughout the year, I'm sure we can get through it in 2022.
 - We are trying to not just throw resources at the backlog, but to understand how it develops. An example is a poor inventory.
 - Historically installers have borrowed fibers when doing installations without solid documentation. They have also made emergency repairs that did not get documented.
 - This means when someone asks for a dark fiber lease or a new customer wants to sign up, we often have to send a technician to go evaluate the current state of the fiber.
 - Every single request takes longer to fulfill, and makes the backlog longer to get through.
 - I don't want to just throw more resources at the backlog but create efficiency so we can do more with fewer resources.
- This month's Broadband report to the Light Board was mentioned.
 - I will definitely continue to refine and expand that to include many of the metrics discussed by Scott and others.

(end of Jason's Notes)

Mark there are opportunities for sustainability and equity in access.

Mark commented on cooperation with adjacent communities between Concord and such towns as Carlisle and Acton as discussed tonight. Mark discussed water treatment and connection to Nagog Pond Reservoir for connecting SCADA (control system) information out toward route two and Bruce Freeman trail crossing.

Mark – discussed that there might be opportunity in adjacent communities if we reach limitation.

Scott commented on the update from Jason and the thoughtful direction for CMLP broadband.

Gordon also express appreciation for Jason report and hoped that this work by the citizens was empowering the team members.

Mark – for next steps – would like to have some things for additions and changes with each of us focusing on the sections we worked on but don't constrain ourselves to this.

Mark will work on the debt schedule that might make sense and capital planning.

We should put a straw man of what a capital program would look like.

We should agree to those changes next meeting and create final copies.

May, first week of may publication for virtual town meeting.

Mark – is there a deck or letter that goes back report to Select Board and Town Management.

Terry Ackerman:

Select board, when the time is right, present our report and have discussion.

There will be a new chair by then.

Have been assuming that the committee will come in

Draft report to be complete on April 28.

Mark we don't have specific plan for next round of public comments

Need to clarify – next round and follow up questions with CMLP board and public questions.

Mark did think there need to be more clarity and sharpen the message of the report.

Terry Ackerman – has looked through the draft and the executive summary.

It is really moving along. Would like a sense from this committee how we would like to proceed with Select Board and public. Select board is willing to accommodate committee.

Mark – target May 23 for review with Select Board.

Gordon – one comment said that similar recommendations appeared in five different places.

(Matt Johnson comment)

Mark Discussed the nature of how long it is.

Scott mentioned that the length of the report was indicative of the complexity of the subject and how important it was to consider.

Public Comment

None additional

Motion to adjourn

Scott moved to adjourn
Gail seconded.

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