

Public Benefit Findings Hearing for Broadband Funding
Joint Meeting Minutes
Saturday, February 6, 2021 at 10:00 AM
Via Zoom per Gov. Sununu Emergency Orders #12 & #16

Meeting opened by Caisse (Select Board, Chair) at 10:00 AM

Read Emergency Order Checklist – Ken Caisse

Roll Call Attendance taken:

Select Board: Ken Caisse (Chair), Chair, Bill Ezell, George Willard

CAC Broadband Subcommittee Members: Jessica Hipp (Chair), Christine Robidoux, Dana Nowell, Keith Charlton, Mike Flynn

Statement read by Select Board member George Willard related to postponement of town voting and Select Board meeting held on 2/5/2021.

Presentation by Broadband Subcommittee

Introduction of committee members and welcome from Jessica Hipp. The CAC subcommittee has been working on a Broadband initiative for about a year and a half. This is the first of four hearings, so there will be future opportunities to ask questions.

Slide presentation posted on the town website and available upon request.

Scope: Why are we looking at this?

- Discontent with **internet reliability and service** expressed extensively on Facebook and a survey conducted in spring 2020.
- Anecdotal evidence of **internet problems** through public discourse
- **COVID-19 Pandemic** highlighting inequitable internet access for students and “work from home” families/individuals.
- Increase or maintain **property values**. Evidence suggests property values are 15-20% lower with no broadband.
- Enable **expanded public participation** in town forums, meetings and events
- **Promote economic development** as highlighted in the Master Plan.

Town of Temple Master Plan

Vision Statement:

- Home businesses should be allowed and encouraged.
- Temple should coordinate with electrical and communications utilities to facilitate meeting the needs of its residents and businesses.

Economic Development:

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- The business landscape is changing...as computer technology and service availability has enabled *some* residents to telecommute and has provided opportunities for others to create their own home-based businesses.

Current Providers

Town residents and businesses are served by:

- DSL provider Consolidated Communications
- Cable TV provider Comcast
- Others utilize TDS, satellite internet or various 4G cellular providers.

DSL service over copper phone lines is limited by distance from a “central office” switch box, which are distributed throughout town.

Cable internet connections are copper coaxial cable with shared bandwidth, resulting in decreased speed with more data consumption within a neighborhood.

Federal Definition of Broadband (FCC) is 25 megabits per second (Mbps) download speed or greater, 3 Mbps upload speed or greater. There is a movement to increase the download speed to 50, but these are the legal definitions at this point.

Netflix recommends a 25 Mbps speed for streaming its top quality video, while Amazon says you’ll need at least 15 Mbps. (Consumer Reports, 2019)

Temple is 55.4% “unserved” with Broadband internet. If it’s available at the street, you are considered served even if you don’t have it running to your home.

Primary Goals of this project:

- Provide access to **broadband internet to 100%** of Temple residents. This means access at the street.
- Minimize impact on taxpayers

Secondary Considerations:

- Provide service that will meet future needs...>25/3. Looking ahead 10-20 years down the road.
- How to control costs to individual subscribers
- Many residents have long driveways and have received high quotes to run line from the street to their house

Map of underserved or unserved roads in town was presented and is attached.

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Funding through a Public/Private Partnership: NH Senate Bill 170

Allows municipalities to pay for “financing of improvements” to broadband infrastructure for locations unserved with a bond approved at town meeting.

Note: SB 170 does NOT require a fiber solution. It only requires a solution that provides = or > 25/3 service.

- a. Send Requests for Information (RFI) from current internet providers - Sent 6/12/20. Following the state requirement, there was a 60 window for providers to respond.
- b. Receive information about current internet subscribers’ service - Received from CCI 6/25/20, Received from Comcast 8/3/20
- c. Send Requests for Proposals (RFP) allowing providers to craft and pitch a solution to provide service
- d. d. “A municipality may select a proposal ... which meets or exceeds the anticipated needs of the community.” – Select Board accepted proposal from CCI on 2/5/21
- e. e. Bonds must be passed at an annual or special town meeting with 2/3 approval of the voters. *(RSA 33:8-a) - Town Meeting is scheduled 6/12/21*

Request for Proposal (RFP)

Initial RFP Sent 9/20/20, Revised RFP Sent 1/27/21

The town received proposals from Comcast & Consolidated Communications (CCI)

Upon receiving and reviewing proposals, the committee ranked the responses and recommended the Select Board **accept the proposal from Consolidated Communications (CCI) on 2/5/2021.**

Reasons for our recommendation:

- All residents in town will be eligible for fiber
- As long as there is a communication path from the pole to the house (aerial or through conduit) there will be no charge for install.
- Requires us to bond approx. \$710,435 over 20 years for infrastructure (SB170)
- CCI invests an additional \$1.1M in the network
- Fiber subscriber fee not to exceed \$14/month to pay bond, CCI guarantees the bond resulting in zero tax impact to the town. You only pay the fee IF you subscribe to the new service.

Public vs. Private Benefit Findings

By improving the speed, reliability and cost over existing service, the following are areas where town residents and businesses benefit at no cost to taxpayers:

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- Economic Impact:
 - Improves infrastructure for business development:
 - Supports small/home-based businesses
 - Improves ability of residents to telecommute
 - Improves access to employment opportunities
 - Improves desirability for home buyers to purchase in Temple
 - Increases the value of your home
- Educational:
 - Improved Internet access for students
 - Improved access to higher education for adult learners
- Public Access:
 - Enable residents to fully participate virtually on town committees, forums, and hearings during health emergencies like COVID-19
- Safety:
 - Fire Dept and Highway Dept communications enhanced
- Enhanced quality of living
 - Every home has access to online services: i.e. streaming movies, CCI TV, telemedicine, shopping, etc

Bonding:

- Requires \$710,435 Municipal General Obligation Bond from the NH Bond Bank or another local lender
- CCI raises the funds to pay the bond via (not to exceed) \$14/month subscriber fee and gives Town the \$\$ to pay bond
- During the roll-out, while subscriber base is insufficient to cover the bond cost, CCI will make up the difference.
- Again, NO TAX IMPACT ON THE TOWN and ONLY SUBSCRIBERS PAY THE FEE.
- Requires 4 public hearings and a $\frac{2}{3}$ vote in favor at June 12 Town Meeting

CCI will come to a future hearing and you can email specific questions if you can't attend hearings.

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Additional Information:

- Fiber is the solution of the future. Much faster than coaxial cable.
- Town will own the network for at least 20 years, depending upon bond type.
- CCI will retain right of exclusive use to run and maintain the network.
- Internet service will be significantly faster and more reliable than existing old copper network.
- Temple Select Board and CAC Broadband Committee are currently negotiating the contract with CCI.
- Additional information will be shared with voters at forums, hearings, and through a mailing over the next several months.
- Subscribe to e-Alerts News & Announcements on the Temple Website TempleNH.org for information about upcoming Broadband forums/hearings.

If you have additional questions after this hearing, you can email us at:

TempleBroadband@TempleNH.org or call the Select Board Assistant at (603) 878-2536.

Questions from the public

Confirmation of dollar amounts: \$710,435 for the Bond. Covers only unserved.

Is there a minimum number of CCI subscribers in order to pay the bond?

- No – CCI estimating based on expected subscribers.

Timeframe for the rollout?

- Timing related to this particular year. In general when there is a town meeting in March, and the bond warrant is approved, the bond sale happens in July usually, start installation in August. Typically service is installed by November. Our town meeting in June. However, just because town meeting is postponed doesn't mean this project will be postponed. Weather may be a factor if they are installing in November/December. We will have to wait and see.

Who pays for repair and maintenance? What if CCI defaults on payments to the town or goes out of business?

- Consolidated services infrastructure. All of the contracts would transfer if they are bought out and we are protected if they went under as part of our contract. The town owns the infrastructure so we could contract with someone else if that happens.

Comment on the strength of CCI and consumer feedback and other towns in particular as far as service?

- Customer feedback has been good. This technology is much better. Towns that have already done this are pleased. Some said they tried really hard not to go with them because of customer feedback, however they CCI made the best offer to their town. We have not heard anything

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negative from the towns that went with Consolidated. They've made some adjustments we will benefit from since they started this process with Chesterfield several years ago.

In the North end of town, will we be able to get only broadband or can we get phone service as well?

- Once you have internet you can get voice over IP with this service. Local and long distance would be available. Wherever CCI offers internet they do offer tv and phone. However that question can be better answered by CCI when they give their presentation to the town at a future hearing.

Fiber is much more reliable and easier to fix than copper.

State law requires a dial tone for 911 service if you have a phone wire. The law would be the same for emergency services regardless of who the provider is, we would need to ask CCI how they would handle this. Whatever the rule is would apply to any provider. The resident is correct, a "Phone COMPANY" (CLEC) must provide e-service over the installed copper line. However, broadband and VoIP may not have to do it (may not be classified same as CLEC under the law). As we do not know NH law, we suggested asking CCI about 911 rules at the next meeting.

What are the monthly costs for service?

- CCI is updating their pricing plans right now, and we have been told those numbers will likely go down. They will share their own plan costs when they do their presentation here in Temple.

Email address to contact Temple Broadband is TempleBroadband@TempleNH.org.

No further questions.

Ezell motion to adjourn. Second by Willard. Roll call vote unanimous.

Meeting adjourned at 10:42 AM.