

Notes from Meeting

Springfield, New Hampshire *ad hoc* Internet Committee (per direction of Town Planning Board
September 6, 2018

Meeting got started at 7:00 pm.

Present: Wayne & Roxy Smith, Brian Putney, Joni Bucher, Steve Schneider, Kevin Lee, Whit Smith

Absent: Mike Howard, Andy D'Amico, Kristin Brush

1. The group discussed when would be the best time and day for future meetings. Nothing was ideal, but it was agreed to continue meeting on Thursday's, but at 6pm. Also discussed the frequency of the meetings. It was agreed we would meet next on THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 27 at 6:00 PM.

2. We went around the room introducing ourselves and providing some personal background.

3. Steve Schneider, Director of Upper Valley Lake Sunapee Regional Planning Commission (from now on referred to as "RPC" for 'regional planning commission) spoke at some length regarding his experience with pushing high speed internet initiatives. He provided history regarding the fiber "backbone" that currently runs from Enfield to Ringe. Springfield was included in this initiative and currently has fiber hanging along Route 4A, Bowman to Four Corners then along Four Corners to Rte 114 (Main Street) and then the length of Main to Georges Mills Road and down Georges Mills road to Sunapee.

Steve also commented that the State has no interest in "building out" a high speed fiber optic network, He said a few years back there was a push for this that actually got close to the State legislature, but when presented to the then "Director of Broad Band" for the State, she was more influenced by the TelCo lobby who claimed this would be a failure – municipalities are not capable of effectively managing an internet service; pointing to the failure in Burlington, Vermont, where there was a local telephone service company. And that was the end of that. The effort was effectively squashed by the Telco's and politicians.

Schneider commented that the approximate cost of running fiber is about \$20,000 per mile. But keep in mind that Springfield already has considerable distance of fiber installed due to the program referred to above.

Schneider said some communities are funding the high speed internet build outs effort with municipal bond financing.

As part of a "round table" discussion, the group talked about the implications of having a high speed FTTH network in the town. Is this the inevitable "way of the future"? What would be the impact to Springfield? Population growth? Higher density living? Is it necessary to attract potential residents to the town? "Be careful what you ask for..." No highspeed internet? Will this result in the town not being able to sustain itself. Springfield has gotten along just fine with no municipal water or sewer. Would there be little impact on the town since other neighboring towns (New London, Sunapee, Newport, Enfield) already have high speed service (either FTTH or cable)? Springfield is really now a "bedroom community" according to Steve Schneider; ideally located between Hanover/Lebanon (DHMC) and Concord.

Steve Schneider reported that, along with the State, the TelCo's serving the population in rural areas have no interest in paying to complete a fiber optic build out. There was discussion about how in New York, particularly in the Adirondacks and north county, the situation was the same. The governor in NY, with the

support of the legislature has now mandated the build out of the high speed FTTH network as an inducement to attract business and new residents.

In a Nutshell: It's a dilemma. We get high speed internet and it opens up possibilities making Springfield more "user friendly" for tele-commuters and small business. This results in the town changing its character.

But if the town declines to have high speed internet and as a town we do not offer the service or technology that modern society is coming to expect. This results in the town changing by not keeping up...

Steve Schneider was surprised to learn that cable tv/internet is not available in Springfield. There was discussion about whether the town even had a franchise agreement with a cable tv service provider. Apparently, the town does NOT.

It was decided that it would be a good idea to try and pose the question to a sample of the Springfield population. The upcoming primary election was perhaps a good opportunity for an informal and random poll. Whit was asked to check and clear the idea with B. Manning, town moderator. The result of that follow up is summarized at the end of these notes.

The group settled on two basic questions:

1. Would you like to have high speed internet service available to you at home?
(If the answer is "No," or "It's not important to me," that's the end of the query.
But if the answer is "Yes," we go to question #2)
2. Is this something you would like the Town to support financially?

We are looking to get a general "feel" for how those who vote respond to the questions.

That was basically it for the meeting. We concluded at about 8:00 pm.

These notes recorded and written by Whit Smith. Additions and corrections are welcome.

Post Script: 09/07/2018

Regarding the follow up – Whit's conversation with B. Manning seeking permission to ask questions of voters at the primary election:

He has given us permission to be OUTSIDE the town meeting house and to ask the questions of voters as they enter the building.

Roxy and Wayne Smith will be there from roughly 8:00 am to maybe 9-9:15 (first hour is busiest) and Joni Boucher and Whit will be there from about 4:30 to 6:30 pm, or so.

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