

Town of Groton
Select Board Work Session Minutes
August 16, 2022

In attendance: John Rescigno, Tony Albert, Ron Madan and Sara Smith (Administrative Assistant - AA)

John called the meeting to order at 6:00pm.

Memo from Sara

Sara submitted a memo for time off requests. The Select Board approved the time off.

Meeting with Carol Miller on Broadband

Carol introduced Leo and Bill from NHEC who were in attendance to give the Town a presentation on broadband. Carol gave NHEC a background that she has been working with the Town and asked NHEC to do the presentation on their project with Grafton County. They gave a background on co-ops and how they work. There are a lot of co-ops doing broadband now. Majority of co-ops are jumping on to broadband. In 2020 members petitioned to change the bylaws to incorporate broadband into their mission. They applied for grants. The Rural Digital Opportunity Fund (RDOF) grant focused on the most underserved areas. There was a \$6m operating subsidy over 10 years. 2021-2022 they realized there was more grant money thru ARPA so they decided to continue to building. Acworth is online now and Sandwich is almost done. Between these two towns it is 186 miles. They also got a grant from Northern Borders Regional Commission (NBRC).

The next project for Grafton County will be 900 miles which will touch 30 towns focusing on the most underserved areas. They are focused on maximizing benefit not profit. Then 2023 would be the balance of system to reach out to all members. In the case of Groton, NHEC serves the entire town so this makes it easier and it would be part of the Grafton build. Groton is fortunate in that NHEC serves 100% of the Town. They are happy to work with the Town and it isn't as complicated as towns that don't serve 100%. They hope to be turning on service before the end of next year, but hopefully well before.

Over the next 2 years there will be \$250 million funding in NH for Broadband. There will also be about \$120 billion in infrastructure funding known as BEAD funding that money has not been programmed on how it will be attributed. Due to this, they are more focused on the \$50 million in ARPA funding. They thanked Groton for the letter of support and said this was very helpful in the grant process,

They said whoever deploys these dollars in the remote underserved areas will effectively be a monopoly provider for the next 40 years.

Carol wanted to know if anyone had questions

John asked if there are plans of burying the lines. They answered that anywhere the electric is buried then the broadband would be too. John asked if there were plans to bury any electrical and broadband that is currently above ground. They said it is very expensive to bury the lines and in the summertime the lines get heated so when they are in the air, they self-cooled which works well. Underground have to have different lines. This is too costly so there are not plans for that at this time.

John said the information that was provided sounds good and the Town could definitely benefit from it and so will NHEC. Tony said that people came to the town and asked about it during the pandemic since we are an underserved area.

They said we should start seeing trucks in the area. The plans are done so the engineers will start coming out and look at wires, check poles, measure, etc. Then there will be a phase to come through and do the modifications to get it ready for the fiber. Then the next step would be to string the fiber. Then they would splice the fiber where the houses would be tapping into it. Then it would be ready to go.

They have started working on it and Rumney is their substation which will be the second one that will be wired and Groton is off of that. By the end of next year, the fiber would be up and running at the latest but they are hoping before that. They can't start any work until they get the grant money or else it wouldn't qualify.

John asked if it would be on the same bill as electric. They said that initially it will be a separate bill but down the path they may combine them but it is more difficult than they thought it would be.

Carol asked if they have heard from EEA on the application and they have not. Carol asked if they are applying for other grants. They are.

Carol said Groton should be getting a map and costs from the Town of Lincoln if we haven't already. We have not received it. Carol will be sending Sara the contact information.

Carol asked NHEC if there was anything the Town can be doing to help with this. He said the letter of support was the biggest thing they needed and they will contact the Town if they need anything else.

For the next meeting Carol would like to invite Consolidated Communications. Even though we will probably go with NHEC we should still look at other options. Spectrum would be the other one after that. It was agreed that we will plan on the next meeting being on September 6, 2022 at 6pm with Consolidated Communications. Then we will schedule Spectrum after that.

Crosby subdivision/property concerns

Sara created a letter based on the discussion during last week's meetings about the concerns with this property. **John motioned to sign the Crosby letter, Tony 2nd, so voted.**

ARPA Funds

Sara explained we received the second round of ARPA funds. The Select Board had previously discussed using it towards the new Town Garage. Sara explained we would have to have a public hearing to discuss this and asked the Select Board when they would want to do this. The Select Board agreed to have this public hearing at the start of the September 6, 2022 meeting at 7:00pm. Sara will post the public hearing.

Meeting with Bubba

Bubba met with the Select Board to go over the following:

- They have been doing a lot of mowing. He believes there is 80 hours. That would have been over \$10,000 out of the budget. By the end of the year there should be 120-160 hours.
- They are getting ready for Old Home Day.
- The culverts on Edgar Albert Road should be done next week.
- TLC did trimming on Edgar Albert Road.
- They had to order strainer for the hydrant. The Select Board agreed this should come out of the hydrant line.
- They still haven't seen any action on the driveway on North Groton Road. Since she responded to the letter via email, it was agreed to start with replying to her email and see if she responds. If not, we will send another letter.

- It was discussed what should be done with the house that burnt down on Halls Brook Road they started to clean it up. They haven't done anything in three years. Jeremy should be the Fire Warden so we can talk to him about it once we know for sure he is official.

41 Rodgers Road

Tony said that as Health Officer he will need to send them a letter and has been working with someone from the State for guidance on how to proceed. Tony said he will come in and sit with Sara to write the letter which will request a time Tony can meet with them to talk about the water.

Having no other business to conduct, John motioned to adjourn at 6:55pm, Ron 2nd, so voted.

Respectfully submitted,

Sara Smith
Administrative Assistant