

TOWN OF EGREMONT, MASSACHUSETTS
MEETING OF THE SELECT BOARD
MINUTES

Date: June 20, 2019
Time: 7:00pm
Place: Town Hall
Egremont

Present at the table were Chair George McGurn, Vice-Chair Lucinda Fenn-Vermeulen, Jeff Lazrus and Rolfe Tessem. Board member Mary Brazie was absent.

See attached for others present.

It was announced that the meeting is video and audio recorded.

The purpose of the meeting was discuss with those living on roads with underground utilities the options to getting broadband service. The roads affected are Hickory Hill(public road), Farm Lane(private road), Miller View(private road), and Brookvale/Hilltop(private road). Residents on these roads are being asked to determine if they wish to have poles installed for the broadband build out paid for by the MBI grant, or keep their build out underground at the cost of the residents on the road.

Jeff Lazarus updated the current status of negotiations and funding venues.

Questions:

Can MBI funds be used on private ways? Yes. The Town cannot expend any funds on private ways but as the MBI funds are going directly to Fiber Connect those funds can be. But the Fiber Connect proposal is only for aerial service. Underground is much more costly and would be at the expense of the property owners.

Who pays for service? Subscribers pay for the service from the roadway to the home.

Who pays for tree removal if needed to put up the poles? Fiber Connect will remove obstructing trees down to the stump as part of their proposal to the Town. If possible trees will be worked around and left standing.

Can aerial lines go through the woods? Fiber Connect needs to be trucks in to the work so all worked is planned along the roadway.

How many poles? That will depend on the topography and engineering. As a rule of thumb poles are about 100' to 150' apart.

If a subscriber wants service to his home underground is that possible? Yes if Fiber Connect is given up front notice to plan for that and there is a useable pathway. The subscriber will pay. If there is viable existing conduit it can be used.

Property owners don't want poles blocking their view. Fiber Connect will do what it can to make the poles as unobtrusive as possible.

How was cost for underground obtained? The costs presented are estimates based on un-engineered installation based on topography, length of roadway, and labor such as tree removal. Hickory Hill has challenges in that there are large trees encroaching on the roadway and water crossings. Brookvale/Hilltop goes through a state reservation and is on the mountain side.

How quickly can the build out be done? Areas without poles, where new poles will be set, require no make ready work so can be completed quickly. Work can begin 3 to 4 weeks after the Town says Fiber Connect can move forward.

How should property owners on these roads report to the Town their decision? In some written format.

Is the June 28 deadline hard and fast? No, it can be extended, but the Town's goal is to move as quickly as possible and try to get this build out done in the construction season.

What makes a road private? Legal Counsel would need to respond to this.

Cost of pole installation vs underground? \$1500 per pole. In Hickory Hill's case the cost would be \$30,000 for poles, paid by the Town vs \$93,000 for underground paid by the residents.

Could a roadway have mixed poles and underground? Yes. At additional cost for the underground. Fiber Connect buys and places its poles but has to contract the trenching for underground.

Can the MBI funds to pay for an aerial build out be used to offset the cost of underground? The offset would be minimal because the cost is so much more for underground.

Can Millerview have direct buried build out? No Fiber Connect does not do direct buried because of the propensity for rocks. They require conduit for all underground build out.

What is the size of the wire and where is in the poles? With the National Grid/Verizon poles the bottom wires are phone service, the middle wires are the Fiber Connect cable, then there is a gap and the top wires are the power lines. The size of the fiber is less than 1". Usually the fiber is about 20-25' up the pole. In the case of Fiber Connects placing their own poles the fiber can be 35-40' up and even 60' if you want to pay for additional pole length.

How would property owners be billed for the underground build out? In the case of Hickory Hill, as it is a town road, it would likely be a betterment placed on the tax bills. The other roads are private so Fiber Connect would bill direct to the property owners.

Why is there is very quick deadline? June 28 was just made up. The Town needs the decision on who these roads will be built out before it can finalize negotiations with Fiber Connect. The Town's goal is to have this build out done this construction season. The Town is trying to move forward as quickly as possible. The deadline got action by getting people present at the meeting for the discussion

Why not Microtrenching which is used heavily in other cold climate states? If residents wish to pay for it then so be it. There are different definitions of microtrenching and no local contractors doing it. The bury would need to be deep enough to not cause problems with future road work such as reclamation.

Meeting adjourned at 8:00pm.

Mary Brazie,
Office Administrator

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The recording of the minutes is on record at the Town Hall for 90 days. Anyone who wishes to may obtain a copy or listen to the recording at Town Hall. Attachments are on file at Town Hall.