

Cable Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

5/16/2022 @ 5:30PM at the Justice Center

Present:

- Stefanie Brand
 - Ward Sanders
 - David Burd
 - Steve Chernoski
 - Shaun Ellis
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- Approval of minutes
 - Brand motions, Sanders seconds. Unanimously approved.
 - Task update
 - Stefanie Brand reports that:
 - Lumen – Century Link has been acquired by Apollo
 - Confirmed we are not in their service territory
 - No imminent action we can take to support the merger
 - If approved by the Board of Public Utilities we could ask Apollo to expand into Lambertville
 - If we want Broadband from Verizon here are the options:
 - DSL
 - 5G Wireless
 - Resolution Draft to be done at a future meeting
 - Ward Sanders reported that:
 - League of Municipalities has sample ordinance language
 - Confirmed Franchise Fee is being paid and in good standing
 - Will reach out to Council Members
 - Copied Council Members but did not get a chance to follow through
 - Dave Burd states:
 - To the best of his research, Comcast has done what they are required to do as a company
 - Cable connection to City Hall and Justice Center is in place
 - Public Access Broadcast option was never implemented because you have to install the studio equipment and infrastructure

- City Hall is seen as an emergency operations center and would allow emergency personnel to speak on a local access channel (which assumes that you have TV, but many people are getting away from TV)
- How do we want to get the word out, what do we want to use and how... it's there, but with migration away from TV is it still something to consider?
- Spoke to Fred Deandra (our Comcast contact) – you can see the hotspot on their apps/map. Most hotspots located downtown area... weak signals can be augmented with an antennae.
- During an extended power outage you get 6-8 hours before failure, when you go past that you lose telephone, internet, and cable tv. They have a cadre of generators they deploy for critical infrastructures and high population.
- Lambertville has only 2 nodes they have to keep alive (One on Quarry St and one near Hibernia Fire Company)
- We can reach out to Fred in an emergency (if it's not already in the works)
- Fred has not gotten back to Dave about alternate options for drop-off and pick-up such as City Hall or Library. Could reps that serve the area be assigned to pick it up?
 - The question is that if you have barcoded equipment and drop it off, can they pick it up?
- Shaun Ellis stated:
 - He will get March minutes to Cindi
 - ATT has a combo deal with Dish
 - They offer service in Lambertville
 - Dave confirmed that you can do satellite through ATT
 - [Orcas Island Mesh network](#) residents were tired of poor service and organized to take action themselves
- Steve Chernoski stated:
 - I didn't get call back from Verlina Reynolds Jackson (our State Legislative Representative) about the Community Broadband Commission she sponsored
 - Mentions the Rural Broadband Initiative – he reached out to Representative Verelli (State Rep)
 - FCC the Rural Digital Opportunity areas, in Lambertville proper (mostly on periphery, Woodcrest Dev. Quarry Rd, 179 Lace Works, Alexauken Creek, Cottage Hill)
 - Date of map 3/17/2020
 - Stefanie Brand said there was a Rural Fund
 - Local carrier had to request the fund (Verizon never requested it)

- Now under the Infrastructure Bill funds passed last year there are new opportunities
 - Dave Burd asks are these open to Comcast as well? They don't have internet on those places, maybe there's dollars there for them to expand?
- Steve Chernoski says, according to the map, there is no coverage on Connaught Hill, and very little on Cottage Hill.
- Dave Burd: to the best of my knowledge 100% of Lambertville is covered by wire. It's really just about them installing the box to expand coverage.
 - If we get the money for them through infrastructure funding or other grants it may be attractive to competitors
- Shaun Ellis: could be an equity issue if hot spots are not accessible, especially in poorer neighborhoods like Connaught Hill.
- Stefanie Brand: Comcast has programs to defray the cost of service.
 - This is something we need to educate the public on.
- Steve Chernoski will email Representative Verelli about the hot spot issue on Connaught Hill.
- Ward Sanders: Did the school have any demographics or statistics on folks who needed service?
 - Shaun Ellis, a Board of Education member, will follow up with the District Superintendent about information on folks who needed assistance.
 - Shaun Ellis will get more info on the program that the school used.
- Dave Burd: we need to ask Comcast what they can provide us so that we don't go looking elsewhere for service.
- Stefanie Brand: drafted a proposed resolution about expanding jurisdiction and scope
 - Stefanie Brand reads the resolution draft.
 - Dave Burd asks if we need to draft a resolution by this committee?
 - All language Dave found related to the CAC is related to Cable only.
 - Stef believes our scope/powers must be changed by ordinance since the CAC was created by ordinance
 - Stef says the definition of cable is usually defined by existence of a "wire"
 - Has been expanded to include wireless, which is only regulated at the Federal level
 - Stef used the language in the resolution to cover "internet, phone, and cable"

- Ward Sanders said that the PennEast committee would draft a letter for council to consider, not resolution. However, he believes that resolution, such as this one, is much clearer.
- Stefanie Brand thinks the resolution can easily be turned into an ordinance
- Ward Sanders suggested an amendment to the resolution: the fourth bullet should read “as requested by the Mayor”
- Resolution is adopted as amended, Stefanie Brand will get it to Shaun Ellis for the minutes and Cindy to get it to the governing body.
- Ward says process will be around 2-3 months, and that we do, in fact, need to adopt an ordinance.
- Future action
 - Stefanie Brand suggests we find as much as we can out about options. We are in the information gathering part of our functions. Not sure if we need the ordinance to be adopted before we have conversations with comcast.
 - Ward Sanders suggests a courtesy heads-up to the mayor to for initial meeting with Comcast.
 - Perhaps have the ordinance in place before a follow-up meeting
 - Stefanie Brand thinks Comcast is our most fruitful path since they are already here and want to expand their business.
 - Stefanie Brand’s perspective is that Verizon is not going to do any more wiring. Their focus is 5G.
 - Dave Burd asks if there’s any work to do on 5G?
 - Stefanie Brand says that could be a conversation with Verizon... where are they at?
 - Apparently, there’s already a survey done under the previous mayor.
 - If the incumbent knows we are pushing for an alternate to encourage competition, it can be helpful for negotiations.
 - The previous mayor said that there might be new towers going up during her administration.
 - Verizon is not the only vendor for 5G. We are very concentrated so the investment for broadband wireless could be fairly low
 - Tillson installs small cells and compete with the Verizons and Lumens/Apollos of the world.
 - Chamber of Commerce may be interested in helping pursue options and advocating on behalf of businesses.
 - Stefanie Brand suggests we try to set up a meeting with Comcast.
 - Dave Burd says it may be a two-step process

- 1st start the conversation with Dave Burd, Stefanie Brand, and Fred from Comcast.
- 2nd then get the entire committee meeting (public)
- Then we will be in a better position for negotiating with others
- Steve Chernoski says we have two satellite providers: Viasat 35Mb/sec, Cuse Network Systems 25mb
 - Education campaign about our options could be helpful to residents
- Stefanie Brand says we need to do more research on wireless (satellite, 4G, 5G). Speeds are advertised, but not always accurate.
- Ward Sanders suggests that a subset of the committee in a meeting with Comcast would be better than a public meeting, but we need to articulate our goals:
 - What can they do for us in terms of wired, hotspots, equipment returns, cost defrayal for low income folks?
 - Dave Burdsays that the complaint from residents is almost always the cost.
 - Migration from TV
 - You don't have to buy a tv package, but there has been a significant drop in revenue so they're putting more into the internet package.
 - Dave Burd and Stef Brand will meet with Comcast
 - Steve Chernoski and Shaun Ellis will do the research on wireless options.
 - We should certainly tell Comcast that we are looking to increase competition and expand our options. Comcast is aware that there is a push for competition.
 - Comcast may respond to that with some effort to demonstrate that they are sensitive to our needs.
 - Also important to bring up in the meeting is the fact that we want to educate people locally.
- Dave Burd suggests "Tell us what you (Comcast) are doing to improve coverage, uptime, make it easier for residents, and be competitive? What are your plans for helping us?"
- Steve Chernoski will share the map of hot spots (or lack thereof)
 - We can educate the public about their options, but we can't endorse any one company
- If we can help Comcast get funding for improvements, would they be willing to work with us?
- Stefanie Brand says that the price is fluid and unregulated, but we can educate them on who to call and how to reduce rates.
- Ward Sanders says the Lambertville City website has an informational page on utilities/contacts. We can certainly give

residents information about all the vendors and who they are and post it there.

- Stefanie Brand says that the pricing is unregulated so we don't have any bargaining power there.
 - Terms and Conditions of service is regulated, but it covers basic things like making sure you still get service.
 - Comcast had to put the infrastructure in, and their costs are all around content, hence packaging.
- Stefanie Brand motions to adjourn. Ward Sanders seconded. Adjourned.