

Leyden Broadband Committee Meeting
Informational meeting with Colrain
May 23, 2016 at 7 PM

Minutes

Attendees: Lance Fritz, Tom Luck, David Curtis, Al Woodhull, Sheila Hourihan and Bob Anson.

New Business:

Tonight's meeting is a field trip by the Committee to meet with the Colrain Select Board to discuss their plans for building out broadband and whether there might be any reason to do something together. The meeting took place at the Colrain Town Offices.

The Leyden Broadband Committee was on the agenda for 7:30. The Colrain Select board meeting began at 7:00. The board includes Eileen Sauvageau, Mark Thibodeau and Jack Cavolick. Their first order of business concerned the police department.

When we were recognized Tom Luck spoke and explained, in brief, who we have met with during our exploration of bringing broadband to Leyden. He said that he believes that Colrain's wire will come to the town from Greenfield and Leyden's wire will come from Bernardston according to the Massachusetts Broadband Institute (MBI). If our two towns cooperated and connected in this endeavor we could both benefit during an outage by feeding from either direction. He added that we do not yet know where Wired West (WW) stands in the picture. There have been many changes concerning WW in the last few weeks, thus we are again thinking of them as a possibility for our source of broadband. Tom also spoke of our meetings with Mayor Martin of Greenfield. Our committee has not yet gotten any statement of cooperation from Greenfield, however. We also intend to explore an option of doing business with Crocker Communications in the next couple of weeks. Tom then asked. "What are your thoughts about broadband?"

The Colrain selectboard reacted very positively to our presence and to our ideas of cooperation and connection as presented by Tom. One Selectperson said, “We feel like you do.” We have to connect our town to broadband in order to secure our future. We also were told that, “making a loop with Leyden just makes sense!” Eileen Sauvageau, selectboard chair said, “It seems like it’s a no-brainer to hook up with you.”

Tom Luck then added that Leyden is not interested in wireless connections to the homes, although that may be the way that Greenfield is going. Rural towns have a different set of requirements in that our homes are spaced farther apart than those in a city. Al Woodhull clarified that Greenfield’s backbone is made up of wired connections. Greenfield is talking about a symmetrical system where upload and download speeds are the same. We want that for Leyden also. It is a requirement with any sort of telemedical communication. Tom also speculated that if the two towns joined in our proposed network that it could lead to a cost savings for both towns.

Paula, clerk for the select board asked if we had been audited yet and if we had been approved for borrowing. Tom answered that we have not yet been audited and as yet do not have a bond rating. Both Leyden and Colrain have passed debt exclusions at town meetings in 2015. Tom explained that Leyden is in stable financial shape.

Eileen Savageau stated that Colrain is looking into applying for USDA grants to assist with the costs of building their broadband network. She said that the USDA likes to have multiple towns move forward on grants together. Bob Anson stated that he had just begun research on the USDA grants himself. Eileen stated that they are planning on using fiber to the home if they get assistance from the USDA through a grant.

Lance Fritz said that Mayor Martin of Greenfield has expressed great interest in connecting with Leyden. A member of the Colrain Select Board echoed that they are thinking the same thing about their desired relationship with Greenfield.

Our Broadband Committee came away with a conclusion that Colrain seems to share our vision of cooperation and connection in terms of broadband.

We left the meeting at 8:15 pm.