

Broadband Committee-2023- Annual Report

The Broadband Committee met regularly during the year. Our work focused on: 1. Monitoring the several broadband funding initiatives, federally funded, and managed by the State Department of Business and Economic Affairs (BEA); 2. Meeting with Internet Service Providers (ISPs) to determine their interest in working with the town to bring high speed broadband to Cornish.

The committee met with Matthew Conserva, Broadband Program Manager, for BEA. He reviewed the state broadband grants that have been awarded to date and the two pending broadband grant programs. The 2 programs are: 1. The Broadband Matching Grant Initiative (BMGI) designed to fund broadband infrastructure projects delivering high-speed internet (>100/100 Mbps) to unserved (<25/3 Mbps) and underserved (<100/20 Mbps) locations. BMGI is a 75% federal grant and a 25% match by ISPs and/or municipalities. Although not required, ISPs in NH are willing to pick up the additional 25% without contribution by municipalities. This program initially brings \$25,000,000.00 to NH and initial applications for funding were required to be filed in October 2023. Unlike previous grant programs the municipalities are integral parties to the application process and must be signatories to any application with the ISP; and 2. The Broadband Equity Access and Deployment Program (BEAD). This program is designed to fund the hard to reach, “last mile” addresses. This program is not yet operational.

The committee met with representatives of Consolidated Communications and HUB66. There were also communications with Comcast, regarding the BMGI grant application process.

After reviewing options and other due diligence the Committee recommended that we jointly apply for a BMGI grant with HUB66. The Selectmen agreed. Additionally, the Town of Plainfield agreed to join in the application. HUB66 has worked successfully with several municipalities in NH, including Enfield and Bristol and most recently is working on an agreement with Grantham. The grant is pending review with the BEA. If approved, it will provide high speed broadband access to substantially all the unserved and underserved addresses in Cornish and Plainfield. There are 575 address locations in Cornish, of which 181 (22.1%) are underserved and 64 (7.8%) are unserved. By comparison, the statewide average is 2.6% for underserved and 2.0% for unserved address locations.

HUB 66 will be picking up the 25% match required by the grant and intends to provide fiber coverage to the entire Town and will run approximately 46 miles of fiber and would prioritize the unserved and underserved addresses in town. NH Electric Coop will be providing fiber coverage to approximately 61 addresses in Cornish.

The University of New Hampshire has established an interactive map of broadband coverage around the State, which will be updated regularly. The map is available to the public. The Broadband Dashboard and Web Map and other resources can be accessed through this website:

<https://broadbandnh.sr.unh.edu/portal/apps/sites/#/new-hampshire-broadband-mapping>. The Broadband Web Map provides tabs that allow anyone to easily enter a location challenge or to conduct a speed test. We encourage Cornish (and Plainfield) residents to use the speed test.

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