
Orford Energy Committee

Meeting of the Committee

*** **PLEASE NOTE FORMAT CHANGE DUE TO COVID-19** ***

Tuesday 12th January 2021 at 7:00 P.M.

Online Meeting via Zoom – Details Below

MEETING MINUTES

1. **Meeting called To Order 7:02 PM**

Those present: Ted Cooley, John Miller, Robb Day, Jordon Sutherlin, Mark Blanchard. Scott Gagnon joined in progress. Guests Kathy Landgraf, Chrisanne Hoyt

2. **Approve Minutes:**

10th November 2020 Online Meeting (previously approved)
8th December 2020 Online Meeting. Mark moved to approve, Jordon 2nd. Minutes approved

3. **Reports & Updates:**

- Town Projects
 - Offices energy Projects
 - Foundation
Jordon reports no new information but has not been in communication with the Selectboard since last meeting.
 - Furnace / Thermostat
Jordon reports as above. Mark notes informal conversations with Esther Dobbins-Marsh and others at offices. “No complaints noted”, outlet and inlet ducts thought to be working satisfactorily.
 - Highway Department Project – Highway garage foundation insulation recommendation. Jordon reports as above, no new information. Ted notes that he again encouraged addition of insulation layer during chat with John Adams.
- Grant opportunities. Ted noted that there is no new information, but that he will continue to alert the committee as opportunities are brought to light. He mentioned work underway at Vital Communities and CRJC (Connecticut River Joint Commission). Mark again reminded the committee of the Grassroots Fund and its potential use for smaller project initiatives.
- Future Webinars and other Presentations. Ted continues to alert committee members of opportunities as he is made aware of them.
- Orford Energy Committee Annual Report. Ted appealed for final member review of report, due next Thursday (1/21/2021). Mark noted that committee membership names need update. This will be corrected, and final (draft) document emailed to members following meeting.

4. **Business:**

- Potential projects
 - Orford Broadband Initiative
Ted explained that he had a lengthy talk with John Adams, Selectboard Chair regarding the initiative. Per John, the SB has been working since August 2020 and estimates that they have invested approx. 100 hours in doing so. John setup a

Broadband Committee. Currently this has two members, John Adams and Ted Cooley. John has reached out to Grafton County broadband committee (established August 06, 2020). Per John, smaller towns are not a priority focus at this time. Ted notes that there is another broadband committee active in Keene, NH. They seem more focused upon universal inclusion.

Additional resources were recommended by Anne Duncan-Cooley: Julia Griffen from Hanover, Lyme Fiber. Mark enjoys some background with an earlier EC Fiber initiative and noted that Lyme Fiber is an outgrowth of this early broadband expansion (largely in Vermont). The Lyme project had a project cost of approx. \$3 million under the auspices of ValleyNet/EC Fiber.

Kathy Landgraf noted that she has heard that Fairlee, VT residents have been invited to apply to Lyme Fiber as they are apparently considering expansion into Vermont. Ted notes some challenges in interstate services.

Mark reported on the earlier Topsham Telephone deployment in our area of the Upper Valley. He states that Fairlee, Vershire, and W. Fairlee communities had attempted to work with EC Fiber and apparently met with some frustration. Mark also worked with Topsham Telephone during this same time (circa March 2011) and Topsham ultimately served these Vermont communities and a portion of Orford. Ted notes that Topsham is reportedly expanding their fiber network in Orford along RT25A, NH RT10 and along Indian Pond Road.

Kathy L told the group that she has contacted Lyme Fiber. She expressed that there is significant interest (20 families) in broadband service through Lyme and was told that there is no existing infrastructure between Lyme and Orford along Orfordville Road. She also has contacted Topsham Telephone. While there is existing utility line infrastructure, it is not viewed cost effective to extend from their termination point (thought to be approx. 1 mile south on Orfordville Rd from 25A) to residences further south along this route.

Chris Hoyt inquired of Ted regarding the Grafton County broadband committee stance on smaller towns. Ted explained that it seems to relate to population density and economies of scale. Ted suggests checking offering from VTel Wireless. They offer wireless plans at 25Mbps (see FCC Household Broadband Guide) <https://www.fcc.gov/consumers/guides/household-broadband-guide> serving NH RT10 area.

Jordon told the group of the North Country Council's broadband survey. There continues to be a need for data (to identify underserved areas). New law allows for bonding (smaller communities) into broadband districts to address economies of scale. <http://www.nccouncil.org/broadband/> He advised local survey might help via Orford listserv.

Scott asks if anyone knows of fiberoptic services that might be running south from Piermont. He also reminded the group that (eventually) Starlink service (Elon Musk satellite-based) will make fiberoptic obsolete. <https://www.starlink.com/> Folks may enter email address and address to express interest and to receive notification when Beta (test deployment) program

becomes available. Kathy L. believes that a neighbor over the Lyme border has Starlink. She will inquire and confirm.

Chris Hoyt suggests that a mailing (boxholder) might produce better results than listserv, or at least compliment returns. Kathy Landgraf noted that Rivendell Interstate School District would seem to be a logical ally in this initiative, especially with the ongoing challenges of remote learning / Covid-19. She volunteered to pursue this.

Ted mentioned that New Hampshire Electric Coop (NHEC) is considering deployment of BPL (Broadband over Power Lines). There is an initiative being launched by NHEC and funded under the Cares Act.

<https://www.nhec.com/nhec-celebrates-start-of-broadband-internet-service/>

The NHEC has built out two fiber optic networks to provide broadband:
<https://www.nhec.com/category/broadband/>

Ted also noted the FastRoads project offering funding for fiber backbone services to municipal, schools, and libraries. Mark notes that this had not been available for residential customers. <http://indepthnh.org/2020/08/06/16m-cares-act-funds-set-for-rural-broadband-upgrades/>

Robb notes that he knows a person residing along NH RT10 that has recently subscribed to Spectrum (Cable?) internet service and is quite satisfied.

Ted added that the Orford Selectboard has requested a \$2,000 budget request in proposed Warrant Article for the purpose of planning broadband expansion. He notes further that Cares Act funding (and similar) tends to be available for “shovel ready” projects – thus the need for a detailed plan / proposal.

Kathy and Chris both expressed interest in volunteering, and Kathy feels that a significant number of her neighbors are also willing to help in this way.

Mark asked if OEC is expected to drive this initiative going forward. Ted responded that the answer from John Adams / Orford Selectboard is, “no”. The Selectboard expects to continue to pursue and manage the broadband expansion efforts. (OEC, as always may continue to provide an advisory role).

Jordon emphasized that the project would continue to be dependent upon Selectboard follow through. He recommends that interested citizens ought plan to submit a Selectboard Agenda item for this purpose and attend their meetings as a group where possible. Mark agreed and noted that this expansion challenge is a State of New Hampshire issue. One that will impact the growth and vitality of communities.

Kathy noted that she plans to contact Annie Kuster and thanked the group, as did Chrisanne.

- OEC Website contents. Ted again reminded the group to watch for content of interest to our community. Fresh content leads to active use and participation.

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- Energy Committee members / candidates
 - OEC Nomination(s) None at this time. Mark again asks if listserv questionnaire might help in this regard. Ed advises that he plans to remain on OEC but intends to step down as Chair. Members should plan to attend all meetings or risk being “volunteered” in their absence.

- Other Business

Mark again reminded the committee of the draft community questionnaire. Review / suggest corrections / additions.

John moved that we adjourn, Mark 2nd – meeting adjourned 7:56 PM

5. **Next meetings:**

Committee Meetings:

9th February 2021, Online Via Zoom, 7:00 p.m.

9th March 2021, Online Via Zoom, 7:00 p.m.

6. **Adjourn**

Topic: OEC 2nd Tuesday Zoom Meeting

Time: Jan 12, 2021 19:00 Eastern Time (US and Canada)

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For Help, contact tedc@cooleyllc.com or 603 353 2139