



TOWN OF READFIELD – Town Manager

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To: Readfield Select Board
From: Eric Dyer, Town Manager
Date: April 6, 2023
Subject: Ad-hoc Connectivity Committee

Background, Purpose, and Authority

In 2021 the Select Board formed the ad-hoc Broadband Internet Committee to consider Broadband Internet needs and solutions in town. The group performed their work as directed and was disbanded following the Town Meeting vote in June of 2022. There were several key points that came from the discussions held around the idea of municipal broadband that have received varying degrees of attention:

- The Town should consider working with Charter/Spectrum to investigate expanding service through them and completing their 100% coverage of the Town
- There are a lot of residents who qualify for reduced cost internet service already who don't take advantage of it because it's not well known
- There are many different ways to improve connectivity that don't cost tax dollars including public education efforts, Wi-Fi spots at public buildings, volunteer tech support, and collaboration with tech-centric non-profits
- Competition is good for customers and services like 5G cellular internet, privately owned fiber, and satellite options should be encouraged to compete in Readfield

The Select Board recently authorized the negotiation of a renewed Franchise Agreement with Charter/Spectrum and the formation of a committee to assist with that effort, and to address other issues of connectivity in our community. This memo establishes the basic parameters for the committee that was authorized. The purpose of the (ad-hoc) Connectivity Committee is to pursue and promote better connectivity for Readfield residents and businesses, including but not limited to the bullets listed above. The Connectivity Committee is formed pursuant to a vote of, and is advisory to, the Select Board.

Organization and Administration

1. Term - The Committee shall be in effect for an initial term of just over two years, through June 30, 2025. The initial term may be extended at any time by a vote of the Select Board
2. Membership - The Committee shall consist of up to seven voting members who shall serve without compensation and shall be appointed by the municipal officers. The Select Board will consider the following recommended representation in making appointments, whenever possible, with the understanding that this representation is not a requirement:
 - a. At least two members with experience in the telecommunications field
 - b. At least two members with public or private utility experience
 - c. At least two at large Readfield Voters
 - d. One member of the Select Board

3. Appointment - The Committee shall be appointed by the Select Board in consideration of the Procedures for Application and Appointment. Appointments may be terminated without cause by a majority vote of the Select Board.
4. Member Term - Members shall serve through June 30, 2024.
5. Chairperson - The Committee shall elect a Chairperson from among its members. The Chairperson shall call meetings as necessary or when so requested by a majority vote of the Select Board. The Chairman shall preside at all meetings.
6. Vice Chairperson - The Committee shall elect a Vice Chairperson from among its members to serve in the absence of the Chairperson.
7. Secretary - The Committee shall elect a Secretary from among its members. The Secretary shall maintain a record of all proceedings including all correspondence of the Committee and regularly submit the records to the Town Clerk.
8. Notice - All meetings shall be held in a public place and scheduled through the Town Manager or Clerk who shall provide reasonable notice to the public.
9. Quorum - A quorum necessary to conduct business shall consist of at least a majority of voting members.
10. Support - The municipal officers and town staff shall cooperate with and provide the Committee with such information as may be reasonably necessary and available to enable it to carry out its duties. The town staff shall also provide assistance updating electronic records as necessary.
11. Public Meetings and Records - All meetings and records shall be subject to the Maine Freedom of Access Act, 1 M.R.S.A. Sections 401-410 and the Town of Readfield FOAA Policy.

Tasks

The Connectivity Committee shall:

1. Assist the Town Manager and Select Board with the negotiation of a Franchise Renewal with Charter/Spectrum.
2. Collect, review, digest, and incorporate technical information and data related to connectivity issues in Readfield, and recommend potential solutions with little or no tax impact.
3. Pursue public outreach, education, and engagement around connectivity, with a focus on assisting older and lower-income residents.
4. Actively involve relevant committees, organizations, institutions, and interested parties to improve connectivity in Readfield.
5. Report to the Select Board a minimum of quarterly.