

Tamworth

Economic Development Committee

Minutes from the November 5, 2009 meeting

The meeting was called to order at 7:05 PM.

Committee members present: Pat Farley and Sheldon Perry. Alternates present: Karen McNiff and Becca Boyden. From the public present: Gunnar Berg.

For the purposes of the meeting, alternate Karen McNiff will be standing in for Chris Money Penny and alternate Becca Boyden will be standing in for Michelle Cleveland.

The minutes from the October 1, 2009 meeting were tabled due to lack of board members in attendance.

Broadband

With Gunnar Berg in attendance, the discussion turned to wireless broadband networks. Gunnar is the systems administrator for the CyberPine Cooperative, Inc. in Sandwich, NH. Because the Sandwich master plan placed connecting all its residents to the internet as its number one priority, Gunnar became the driving force in initiating, setting up and maintaining a wireless broadband system for many of its rural residents.

The CyberPine network is meant for those households in a rural location where DSL is not possible and where satellite connection is the only option. Due to the limitations of the satellite connection, the local wireless network is very attractive. It offers more reliability and better service.

The discussion first centered on the bankruptcy issues of Fair Point Communications. Fair Point (FP) has not been meeting its DSL quotas and will be facing stiff fines (\$500,000 for every percentage point short). Because of the bankruptcy, FP may not be held to DSL quotas, so it will be some time before we can expect to see this in either Sandwich or Tamworth.

There was a discussion about demand on the internet. Demand is always pressing supply for all the broadband carriers, who are constantly playing "catch up." Caps on lines are being instituted by the carriers. Gunnar has ordered a new T1 feed (3 MB) from FP. He is not confident, however, that FP will meet its deadline. The current single T1 line is expensive because it comes all the way from Plymouth. Distance costs money.

NHVT (New Hampshire/Vermont) is a CLEC. A CLEC can buy broadband wholesale from FP. NHVT has collocated equipment in Meredith and has applied to FP to collocate equipment here in the Tamworth central office (CO). This request must be honored in 60 days, but, to date, it has been more than 6 months.

The discussion continued about the requirements for setting up a wireless system in Tamworth. The " Hub", or access point, could be on Great Hill Fire Tower, Bunker Hill or Page Hill. This would require a line of sight from a point within DSL range of the CO, or one or more T1 lines, or a connection to Time Warner Cable. An access point costs approximately \$4000 to set up. There would be further infrastructure requirements, as well.

CyberPine has 9 access points which are hill tops in the area, covering roughly 250 square miles and serving 27% of Sandwich. A user must have line of sight, with minimal trees or other obstructions for the system to work. A lower frequency (900 Mhz) signal on the Red Hill access point and at the Baptist Church, minimizes these minor interferences. CyberPine does not lease any of the access points; rather it gives free service to those landowners. This is the advantage of a locally owned provider and WiFi's minimal impact. The cost is \$45/month for the service. CyberPine's connections go from the access points to the library and then out T1 land lines or wirelessly to Red Hill and then to Meredith DSL.

Gunnar suggested the following steps for initiating a wireless broadband service in Tamworth:

- Canvas our customer base to see who is interested and determine which hill tops they can see.
- Determine what funds are available for a non profit consumer cooperative.
- Find a "geek" who is young and energetic. It takes technical expertise, day to day. As an administrator, servicing the consumers takes lots of time.
- Much of the initial construction can be done with volunteer labor.
- The service should not be free. It has value.

Other business: Due to the late hour and the lack of attendance, there was a motion to adjourn the meeting, which was seconded.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:40 PM