

Four Towns Broadband Committee Meeting Minutes

A meeting of the FHMS Four Towns Broadband Committee took place on Thursday, June 17, 2021. (Note: This meeting was recorded.)

In Attendance: *

- Hawley: Lark Thwing* & Rick Kean
- Florida: Christine Dobbert
- Monroe: David Gagne*
- Savoy: Melanie Glynn* & Sarah Satterthwaite
- DesignNine: Jack Maytum
- WiValley: Brian Foucher
- Otelco: Trevor Jones (absent)
- Interisle: Steve Harris & Fred Goldstein

Minutes
Approved,
FHMS Four-Towns
Committee,
8/19/21

*Voting Members

Additional Teleconference Participants:

Cindy Bosley	Jason Burdick
Eric Leclair	

Note: there may have been other callers who did not identify themselves.

➤ **Quorum, Call to Order**

The Meeting was called to order at 4:30 pm.

➤ **Review and approve minutes from the March, April & May meetings.**

Minutes of the March, April & May meetings were approved unanimously as written.

➤ **Welcome Melanie Glynn, new rep from Savoy, and all the newly appointed alternate town reps.**

Welcome was extended to Melanie Glynn & Sarah Satterthwaite from Savoy, and Rick Kean as the Hawley alternate. Monroe also has designated an alternate delegate, Carla Davis Little.

➤ **Project updates:**

- **Status of sav-mha, sav-mhd and flo-scr poles**

Sav-mha has its meter installed and the power is on; we are waiting for Eversource to inspect and turn the power on at sav-mhd; flo-scr is up and running.

- **Status of Borden Mountain permit**

Fieldstone Consulting has submitted new drawings and shared with VHB.

- VHB consultants are doing the Environmental Notification Form – a long checklist.
- We have also had preliminary call & review with Natural Heritage.
- After Natural Heritage approval, DCR will determine if OK to proceed with construction prior to enactment of Article 97 legislation.
- Our Target is to be ready to go by mid-August.
- Town of Savoy has agreed to be the easement applicant as the FHMS representative entity.
- Article 97 legislation will then be submitted by governor or state reps.
- Applications will be submitted next to DCR for access and high ground permits.

- **Total installed customers and totals by town**

A total of 285 customers have been connected:

- 71 in Florida;
- 91 in Hawley;
- 29 in Monroe; and,
- 94 in Savoy.

- **Possible new pole locations**

We are looking at three possible locations in Hawley, Savoy, and Florida outside of Phase IV, although it's hard to precisely define without Borden Mountain coverage.

- **Status of the Heath pole petition**

We have resubmitted the application for a hearing to the Heath Selectboard, and will meet next Tuesday. It would serve nine residents in Hawley who would otherwise be hard to reach. The Planning Board was opposed to the pole, but it turns out they do not have jurisdiction for poles on town property.

- **Possible ATT pole in Heath**

Possibility of serving some of the same Hawley homes from future 200' AT&T communications tower in Heath was discussed.

- **CBRS Deployment & issues**

There are a number of performance issues. The design was done with 19 dBe customer antennas but all we had access to were 13 dBe antennas, which deliver inferior results to some of the 900 mhz legacy customers. We expect to receive 21-22 dBe antennas next week which should provide 3-4 times the performance.

- **Network problems/ issues/ lost customers**

There are problems in the Hoosac Tunnel area with 900 mHz and tree foliage coming out. Links have been swapped out with a 2.4 connection which should result in better traffic flow with low latency.

Only those with unobstructed view of nearby access points can get close to 50 Mbps service. Others can only get 12 or 25 Mbps, but many connections should improve with time, especially when Borden Mountain service comes online.

The network has lost about 20 customers. Some said they would come back once satisfactory service is available.

- **Network rings and additional 500 meg from Fla PoP**

The Florida connection was taken down temporarily until loads on the various connections can be rebalanced.

Borden Mountain will be the most significant addition for redundancy. The next most significant addition will be the Berkshire East to Whitcomb Summit link. The Whitcomb Summit site has been completed.

- **Questions from meeting attendees**

Sarah asked if there was a solution to her connectivity issues. Her Savoy location couldn't be reached via Chapel. It is slated for Borden Mountain and the possibility of an additional pole site to reach her and other nearby customers is also being explored.

Melanie asked about Savoy homes close to the Florida line. Most of these will be served from Borden Mountain. She also asked about Loop Road customers who now should be able to receive service from Chapel via CBRS or from one of the other sites in the area. One customer has a latency issue probably related to the software on her laptop, not to the service at her house.

Jason said that some potential subscribers are reluctant to give up their Verizon DSL for an uncertain network connection. WiValley at least wants to know who these potential customers are to get them connected to the system, even if they can't receive service immediately.

- **Any other issues**

Cindy noted that customers complain that they're not even getting close to the speeds they're paying for. For example, you may pay for 25 Mbps but only receive 18 Mbps. Conversely, if you pay for 12 Mbps yet 18 Mbps is available, you will still only receive 12

Mbps. It was pointed out that 21 percent of the connections in the four towns are slated for a maximum of 12/2 Mbps. When the next study is done for the FCC, those numbers will be shared with customers.

It was also noted that those who do not yet have service can use the free Wi-Fi at various town locations.


➤ **Schedule the next meeting date.**

The date for the next meeting was set for Thursday, August 19, 2021.

➤ **Adjourn**

The meeting was adjourned at 5:31 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,



To access the recording, use this link: <https://fccdl.in/AEiCTFaPZH>