





Four Towns Broadband Committee Meeting Minutes

			
Florida, MA	Hawley, MA	Monroe, MA	Savoy, MA

FHMS Four Towns Broadband Committee Meeting Minutes

There was a combined in-person and teleconference meeting of the FHMS Four Towns Broadband Committee on Thursday, September 24, 2020 at 4:30 pm at the Florida, MA Town Hall. (Note: This meeting was recorded.)

MEETING MINUTES

In Attendance:* **

- Hawley: Lark Thwing,* Rick Kean (via phone)
- Florida: Christine Dobbert,* Cindy Bosley,
Stephanie Pare, Ron Bosley
- Monroe: David Gagne,*
- Savoy: John Tynan*
- DesignNine: Jack Maytum (via phone)
- WiValley: Brian Foucher
- Otelco: Trevor Jones (via phone)
- Interisle: Steve Harris

Minutes
Approved,
FHMS Four-Towns
Committee,
10/29/20

*Voting Members

**Teleconference Participants:

Stephanie Pare, Florida	Metsma Janan, Savoy	Melanie Glynn, Savoy
Lorraine Hartnett, Savoy	Sarah Satterthwaite, Savoy	

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

Quorum, Call to Order:

Chairman Lark Thwing declared a quorum and called the in-person/ telephonic meeting to order at 4:30 pm.

◆ **Minutes of the August 28 Meeting.**

The Minutes of the August 28, 2020 FHMS Face-to-Face/Teleconference Meeting were approved without discussion.

◆ **Reporting from Brian on:**

➤ **Review status of MBI payments to WiValley for Phase 1AA and Phase 2.**

- ❖ Phase IAA payment has been received.
- ❖ Brian said he expects to submit Phase II report tomorrow, with payment anticipated next week.

➤ **Data analysis for 9/12-13/2020 testing of phase 2 connections. (part of phase 2 report for payment)**

- ❖ Brian said he will submit an analysis to meet state reimbursement requirements, though the eventual goal is to meet federal CAF II requirements.

➤ **Expected installation of all remaining poles approved for installation**

- ❖ Brian indicated that the targeted poles are scheduled for completion by the 2nd week of October (week of the 9th), including delivery (but not installation) of Borden Mountain pole.

➤ **Poles not yet finalized or approved**

- ❖ Brian said there are two poles in Savoy pending a hearing (he expects to test next week to determinate their exact locations), plus Borden Mountain.

➤ **Status of utility connections of all upright poles.**

- ❖ Brian expects all upright pole utilities to be hooked up in 2-3 weeks.

➤ **Status of Phase 3 and expected completion.**

[Updated critical path chart for this and other charts to follow.]

- **Status of Phase 1A, Borden Mountain site. (that connects a LOT of customers.)**
 - ❖ Brian reported that they had been going back and forth with drawings, and that he expects to submit the plan soon. The pole location has been informally approved by DCR, as there should be no interference from FHMS antennas mounted higher than the 65-foot fire tower.

- **Status of phase 4 (if any)**
 - ❖ Brian said he expects to have Dig Safe approvals next week.

- **Status of Lawless site.**
 - ❖ The discussions are going well. The landowner is awaiting bank approval, etc., and then will require approval from the covenant holder. The Agreement will be to offer one tier of service above residential optimal in lieu of payment to current and future landowners. The electric meter to be installed, with FHMS to pay for electricity yearly. The FHMS board voted unanimous approval.

- **Updated Critical Path chart**
 - ❖ Brian agreed to send this document to Lark, who is doing a Gantt chart. The goal is to complete the infrastructure by year's end, with customer hookups continuing into 2021.

- **Updated chart of poles and links and their status**
[Updated critical path chart for this and other charts to follow.]

- **Update on accidents, COVID effects, staffing in general and inventory levels for forward progress.**
 - ❖ No change in the current status. Brian said he is still looking for technicians, and is in discussions with two potential subcontractors.

- ◆ **Thursday conference calls with WiValley, MBI, Design 9 and Lark**
All participants agreed that weekly updates are very helpful.

- ◆ **Otelco Customer Service discussion by WiValley and MBI**
Brian has discussed this with Trevor Jones. Trevor said that since installations are in flux while awaiting CBRS upgrades, etc., it is difficult

to communicate with customers. However, a number of customers have complained about a lack of Otelco customer service follow-up to their calls. Trevor said he will address that with his managers.

◆ **Efforts to connect households with school age children**

There are hot spots at the base of a number of poles and Lark is looking to set up warm areas for winter so students will not have to work in cars in Hawley. He suggested that other Towns might consider doing the same. Lark said that Brian is working with John Tynan to make the recreation building along Rte. 116 a hot spot rather than the Savoy Town Hall, as it will provide for much better parking and warmth.

◆ **Comments/feedback from Design Nine**

Jack said that he thinks we're making some progress, and that once we get some CBRS equipment installed, we can make some more serious evaluations, and once Brian gets all the poles up, we can do some checks for redundancy and other.

◆ **Comments/feedback on customer contact**

Brian explained that a number of overtaxed 900 MHz sites will be upgraded to CBRS (Citizens Broadband Radio Service) once equipment is added to sites. This will improve the performance of the affected portions of the network.

- Lark said that customers who can, should want to connect to the Sidehill Farm site as it should provide excellent reception. Brian also clarified the reason why the initial Sidehill Farm site did not work properly – it was a hardware fault rather than an installation issue.
- Brian spoke with Lorraine Hartnett from Savoy about the hookup at her home. Other people from Savoy asked about timing on certain sites.
- Sarah Satterthwaite asked if she'd ever get her speed back to 25/3. Brian said it depends on hardware – may have to swap-in CBRS for the existing unit.
- Lorraine Hartnett asked, given her location, if it would ever be possible to get to 50 download speed. Brian answered that it was hard to tell for sure, but that in his 14+ years' experience, he has been amazed at how the technology has changed in terms of power and speed. Lorraine responded that it sounded like the best that could be hoped for would be about the top of what HughesNet can

give us, *when it's working*. And Brian added that the FHMS system would do much, much better in terms of latency (or message delay in transmission) – 15 – 20 ms. for FHMS versus 600 ms. for HughesNet. After getting an explanation of latency, Lorraine said that she now understood why, when she had tried to conduct a Webinar using HughesNet shortly before this meeting, it was a “total disaster.”

- There was discussion of another site in Savoy that was “in a hole” and might never be connected. After getting the address for further research, Brian said that that that location would be served by Borden Mountain.
- Lark and Brian answered questions about when they thought the infrastructure would be done – for currently targeted poles, they said, by the end of the year. But that does not mean all sites will be installed by then.
- Rowe and Windsor are towns who may want to add outlying residents to the FHMS network. Also, a number of customers might be possible in Charlemont. But Lark and Brian indicated that the four FHMS Towns come first.

◆ **Other business not anticipated prior to posting.**

There was none.

◆ **Set next meeting date.**

Lark set the next FHMS tele-meeting date for Thursday October 29, 2020 @ 4:30 pm. This will be a combined in-person and telephone conference meeting – physical location will be Florida, MA.

Adjournment:

Chairman Thwing adjourned the meeting at 5:32 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,



Steve Harris



Rick Kean

10/1/2020

To access a recording of this meeting, click here: <https://fccdl.in/eCxJSO1wHQ>