



# Lamoine Board of Selectmen

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## Minutes – January 13, 2021

Chair Kathleen Rybarz called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM – via Zoom meetings.

Present were: Selectmen S. Josephine Cooper, Kathleen Rybarz, Robert Christie, Nathan Mason; Technology Committee members Merle Bragdon, Brett Jones, Michael Risoldi, IT Director Bill Butler, Bayley Baldrige, Dean Tyler (Hancock), and Consultant Brian Lippold

**Broadband Expansion Discussion** – Mr. Lippold said the town had received a firm proposal from Premium Choice of Bangor to provide service in some unserved subdivisions off Mud Creek Road. He said they fiber optic service in several areas, including Surry. He said the fiber optic project would require a subsidy of \$150,000, which is about \$2,500 per potential subscriber. He said the proposal would require a pre-subscription commitment before Premium Choice would commit to building.

Mr. Lippold said the town could work with Charter, which is a lower cost, to serve about 67 households. He said that would likely require a subsidy of about \$100,000. He said Premium Choice's proposal uses fiber optics with symmetrical service (same speed upload and download), while Charter/Spectrum is copper coaxial which is not a symmetrical service.

Brett Jones asked if Charter/Spectrum customers could pay more and receive symmetrical service. Mr. Lippold said the company does not offer symmetrical. Nathan asked if Charter would require a pre-subscription commitment. Mr. Lippold said that would be something for potential negotiation.

Dean Tyler of Hancock asked if he could get a copy of the report Mr. Lippold was displaying on the meeting screen. Stu said he could e-mail that tomorrow. Mr. Tyler said Charter had given a cost of \$87,000 to wire just the Eagle Point area.

Brett asked if Charter could offer fiber optics. Mr. Lippold said Charter has a hybrid of fiber and coaxial service. Brett asked what would happen if Premium Choice ceased operations. Mr. Lippold said that was unlikely, but it's best to be prepared. He said other companies could operate with the infrastructure that is built.

Merle Bragdon asked about providing service down long driveways. Mr. Lippold said he's not sure what Premium Choice has for a policy but would try to get answers. Jo asked if Premium Choice doesn't get the 80% commitment, would the deal be off. Mr. Lippold said that is correct.

Mike Risoldi asked if underground service is possible, as much of his subdivision has underground utility service. Mr. Lippold explained how that might work. Merle asked if it would be worth asking Consolidated Communications about upgrading service to the area. Mr. Lippold said he's asked in the past and they were unresponsive, but he could ask again. Merle asked if they might require a subsidy. Mr. Lippold said he would ask.

Brett remarked that there seems to be a line gap on Mud Creek Road. Mr. Lippold said there is some underground service between poles.

Bayley Baldrige asked what monthly service might cost with Premium Choice. Mr. Lippold showed the cost flyer showing a range of \$40 to \$140 per month. Nathan said Charter provides other services such as TV and Phone and whether Premium Choice did. Mr. Lippold said Premium Choice offers voice service, but not TV. Discussion followed about the various service offerings.

Brett asked if the subsidy might be spread out over multiple years. Mr. Lippold said he would check. Merle said the town could also borrow the money and apply for grants. Mr. Lippold said a ConnectME grant could be in the \$25,000 to \$50,000 range. He said there is a round of ConnectME grants being awarded with an application deadline of the end of the month. Stu noted that nothing is included on the town meeting warrant at this time.

Bill Butler asked if Hancock could factor into some of the subsidy and a brief discussion followed with Mr. Tyler. Merle asked if Charter would waive the 20 house per mile requirement. Mr. Lippold said if the town provides a subsidy to have them build out, there is no density requirement.

Stu asked what the next step should be. Mr. Lippold said it was to reach out to Charter to see what they might propose. Nathan asked whether Premium Choice might expect to pick up some current Charter customers if they built out on Mud Creek Road. Mr. Lippold said that is an expectation.

Merle asked if the Selectmen should prepare an article to ask to borrow money. A brief discussion followed, and both Nate and Jo said they were not interested in adding anything more to the budget for the annual town meeting. Jo said perhaps it could go to a special town meeting.

Bob asked whether the potential for more home construction might be an incentive to a service provider. Stu said having broadband service makes a town more marketable. He asked Mr. Lippold if he could contact Shelley Winchenbach of Charter to seek a proposal. Mr. Lippold said it would likely be quicker if the town contacted Charter, as response to his inquiries have been very slow.

Jo moved to request Stu to contact Charter/Spectrum to seek a proposal to wire up the Eagle Point, Great Ledge and Partridge Cove Subdivisions, with input from Mr. Lippold. Nathan 2<sup>nd</sup>. **Roll Call Vote in favor was 4-0.**

A brief discussion followed on timing and a special town meeting. There was also a brief discussion about having the Town of Hancock buy into some of the project.

**Other Emergent** – Stu noted the garage door at the salt sand shed is damaged beyond repair and he's awaiting the estimate to replace it.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 7:17 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Stu Marckoon, Adm. Asst. to the Selectmen