

Town of Ashfield
Informational Session
Broadband for the Town
August 24, 2015

Ashfield Select Board: Tom Carter-Chair, Ron Coler-Vise Chair, Todd Olanyk

Town Administrator: Derek Brindisi

Assistant Municipal Clerk/Scribe: Lynn Taylor

Meeting was held in conjunction with Information Technology Committee and Finance Committee.

This meeting is an informational meeting only, no decision will be made at this meeting. Carter Chair of the Select Board moderated the meeting. Carter starts by reading STM article that is asking the Town to approve spending 2.3 Million Dollars to fund Broadband installation. The STM will be on September 8, 2015 starting at 7:00 Pm the article will have to pass by a 2/3 majority on the floor of the STM. Carter then reads the Ballot question regarding spending 2.3 Million Dollars to fund Broadband installation. The Special election will be held on September 10, 2015 from 7:00AM – 8:00PM the ballot question will have to pass the election by a majority vote.

Carter gives a few of his thoughts. This project will be the largest money wise in the history of Ashfield. Project will have an impact on the tax rate as well as the tax bill you receive. Concerned of the affect this project will have on other projects already on the SB table dam, retention wall, Transfer Station, office space concerns in Town Hall, Purchase of new office space, equipment for Highway and Fire, and work that needs to be spent on Town Hall just to keep it standing.

David Kulp Chair of the IT Committee and has been working with Wired West for about 5 Yrs. gives brief overview of the Broadband issue and the thought that Ashfield needs to do this project. 44 Western Mass Towns belong to Wired West. There has been legislation passed that allows 40 million dollars to help pay for the “Last Mile” of Broadband for the Towns. The Town is being asked to come up with 2.3 Million Dollars to bring Broadband to every house in Ashfield. Cost with Wired West depending on package would be a minimum of \$50 for internet and \$25 for phone.

Ted Murray calls the Finance Committee to order at 7:22 PM

Ted Murray Chair of the Finance Committee drafted a handout outlining the individual amounts the tax payers in Town will be paying and when. (Document 3). Murray reviews and explains the handout line by line. Taxpayers should also expect at least a 5 % increase in property values as well.

Carter opens the floor up to questions.

David Newell Steady Lane Rd and Finance Committee shares some of his thoughts with the Board as well. Why should everyone have to pay if everyone is not using it, this project money wise would be like building three Sanderson Academy's.

Robert Abbatiello Watson Spruce Corner explains he pays roughly \$200 dollars now for his service and if the estimate Wired West is saying is correct \$50 internet, \$25 for phone even with tax rate increase he feels would be cheaper. Also the comment of everyone not having to pay if they don't use it he feels that there are many roads in Town he has not even been on yet he still pays for the running of Highway.

Erik Sherman March Rd. questions when the wired west estimates were done and how, who will own the infrastructure if it is decided to proceed with Wired West. Jim Draw from Wired West explains the infrastructure will be owned by Wired West and the estimates were figured using models and formulas from Wired West.

Phil Pless Cape Street as a realtor Ashfield needs this in his opinion your house would sell much quicker if there was Broadband available than one that does not have it available. Feels that \$5000.00 for each homeowner is nothing you would make that up at the sale of house if selling.

Robert Masla Apple Valley Rd concerned with the technology what will it be in 20 Yrs? is Broadband upgradable? David Kulp responds that fiber optics is as upgradeable as any material.

Ron Coler Bailey Rd. Select Board member would like to see more information regarding revenues in regards to this project. More data for the STM would be helpful for him.

Carole Groman Barnes Branch Rd will it be available to each and every house in Ashfield, and when can we expect it to be up and running? Yes planned to be available to everyone, should be running by 2019.

Mark Burton Beldingville Rd questions Ashfields ratings in regards to purchasing bonds and what will the rates look like 4-5 yrs. out. Murray advises the Finance Committee met with the Towns Financial advisor and the Towns rating aa- to a+ , Murray used the rate of 5% in the yrs. out.

Doug Cranson Cape Street asks if this was in the scope of the new Town Administrators scope? Carter replies yes it is however this issue has been research for quite a long time we will mainly be looking to those involved.

John Angelman Smith Rd. would like to see a business plan. Kulp gives him a business plan and explains that copies are also available in the library for review. He sees a changing landscape in the future with the pipeline coming through property values will drop drastically

Gail Abbott Ashfield Mountain Rd. questions how, why and what does it look like. Kulp advises it will be hung on existing poles in some cases some new poles may need to be added.

Claire Courmand bird Hill Rd. Feels a project of this size will affect other entities in the Town such as Highway, Town Hall, the lake dam.

Ricki Carroll Main Street read in the paper that there would be a revenue stream back to the Town that is not a guarantee. Kulp feels that there will be a revenue stream back to the Town. Steve Nelson from MBI advises there will be governing built in and there will be revenues back to the Towns.

Erik Nelson Beldingville Rd. holds up a poster that his boys made years ago pertaining to the lack of internet in Ashfield. Feels it is a must for Ashfield.

Judy Haupt Watson Spruce Corner questioning if the fiber optics would fit in her already run conduit. Yes it will very small.

Andy Smith South Wager Rd. right now there is a 38% discount from state that will not be there forever.

Tiertza-leah Schwartz Sears Rd. thanks everyone for all the hard work and research. Feels it is essential to do however spending before we know what we are spending it on is a problem. Are there any broadband up and running? Kulp no there is not

John O'Connor Plainfield Rd. feels that we cannot afford not to do this project if we do not move forward Ashfield will die.

Anne Yuryan Thayer Rd. just would like people to know this really is going to be a hardship for some residents in the Town. Not everyone can afford this.

Douglas Mollison Hawley Rd. Not against the project, however we are giving 2.3 Million dollars with no facts at all.

George BasBas Bug Hill Rd. questions if the State money has to be spent on Wired West. No can be used with others.

Roger Howes Steady Lane Rd. questions the fees Kulp states minimum of \$50.00 for internet and minimum of \$25.00 for phone.

Lui Collins are there huge amounts of taxes and fees as there is with Verizon. Fed tax, sales Tax, 911 fee will be added to bills.

Bill Stathis from Crocker communications gives a brief overview of his company and what they offer

Chris Lynch from Matrix does the same stating that 2.3 Million dollars is not even close to being enough the Town should be looking at closer to 4 Million.

[No decisions were made at this informational meeting.](#)

Coler makes a motion to adjourn at 9:11 Pm, seconded by Carter.

Adjourned @ 9:00 PM