

DUANESBURG BROADBAND COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

Date: Tuesday, September 8, 2020 6:30 PM via Zoom in Town Hall
Next meeting: Tuesday, November 10, 2020 6:30 PM via Zoom in Town Hall

In attendance: Annabel Felton, Mary Ellen Houlihan, Roger Tidball, John Ganther, Katie O'Brien, John Iveson, Zach Butts, Kelly Brooks, Kim Heimburg, Kevin Hogan, Laurel Burback, Jamilynne Myers, Nelson Gage

NEW BUSINESS

- **Effects of COVID-19**

Annabel addressed the broadband issues that impact folks due to COVID-19. Annabel lives on Creek Road and works at home. She utilizes an AT&T Homebase cellular router and the system began failing in June after incumbent providers reinstituted pre-COVID data caps. Mary Ellen and Laurel, both also on Creek Road, are having the same experience. Annabel has discovered, after numerous telephone calls, that her AT&T Homebase cellular router has been deprioritized. Her husband is now experimenting to find a secondary seller of cellular service to provide enough bandwidth for a family of three to work and attend school from home. No good solution has been found yet. Duanesburg has many community members relying on mobile hot spots because they are currently not served by broadband providers. Annabel explained that the school district is providing Verizon cellular hot spots to students in the community who do not have access to broadband at home.

Annabel announced she learned of a Spectrum project to serve 168 homes, mostly in the Town of Duanesburg. This project will not be complete until September 2021. Roger says Spectrum's representative Kevin Egan has not disclosed what 168 homes will get service but has promised information sometime next month.

Zach just moved to Gage Road and is running into connectivity issues. Kelly (Millers Corners Road) was zooming into the meeting while driving her car because she has no broadband or cellular signal at her home. She says Verizon FIOS has run cable on her road but still has not connected to her house, along with 6 other homes near her. Annabel asked if Kelly called Verizon recently. Kelly has done so, but they could not give her a timeline for installation. Roger has a way to contact a Verizon representative and he will call them to see if he can get an answer. Annabel also let everyone know that, while not a solution, there are several free wifi hotspots in the community. The Duanesburg Town Hall has free wifi and lighted parking available for folks to use. If there is ever a problem finding signal, people may contact Town Board member John Ganther for help. The Quaker Street Library also has free wi-fi and a lit parking area. It was noted that the Guilderland Public Library wifi has a stronger signal. The Esperance Hannaford also has a free public wifi connection but availability after hours and signal strength are unknown.

Katie voiced concern about the un-served families and community members, even with hotspots provided, given the expanded need to use internet with the Duanesburg School

District using a hybrid model for learning. College students taking classes on-line are also a factor.

Annabel explained that two 2 years ago, the Town of Duanesburg had close to 600 locations unserved with a highspeed broadband connection. Now the number of unserved households is 217. Jamilynne lives on Suits Road. She purchased a Hudson Valley Wireless device and is still struggling with the service. John Iveson also lives on Suits Road and is struggling with only Verizon DSL and cellular connections.

Roger explained Verizon, Spectrum and Midtel stopped doing installations inside homes during COVID-19. Spectrum is still working on getting service to households on Schoharie Turnpike between North Mansion Road and Route 20. The Spectrum representative is going to update Roger at the end of this month as to what households will be served in our area. Spectrum had to settle with New York State after failing to extend service as quickly as they were supposed to under their merger with Time Warner. John Ganther said Spectrum must serve 145,000 homes statewide and will prioritize the households to be served. Annabel suggested residents unhappy with lack of internet service should contact elected officials and those running for office:

Congressman Paul Tonko
State Assemblyman Angelo Santabarbara
Candidates for State Senate, Richard Amedure and Michelle Hinchey

Spectrum is blaming National Grid for delays in the broadband buildout because pole attachments take so long. National Grid has 200 days from a provider request to grant pole attachments and do make-ready work. The New York Public Service Commission (NYPSC), NY Broadband Program Office and state legislators can apply pressure. John Iveson asked what we could do to speed up the process. Roger said people on Suits Road can contact Angelo Santabarbara to apply pressure. Annabel added that people can file a complaint with the NYPSC. Those contacting the NYPSC must request cable television service. The PSC cannot and does not regulate broadband. However, the NYPSC is responsible for overseeing the Spectrum buildout under the merger agreement with Time Warner and Charter/Spectrum submits regular reports to the NYPSC regarding their progress.

OLD BUSINESS

Left to serve in Duanesburg

<https://www.google.com/maps/d/viewer?mid=1gut6mQN2PBdcakPHl6dixzfcUx2s1-wl&ll=42.782933564783164%2C-74.25165049506914&z=12>

- Status of Road by Road line extension projects by Charter/Spectrum
 - **Schoharie Turnpike (East – from North Mansion Road to Route 20)**
Kim reports Spectrum finished laying cable and green boxes are installed but she still has no service. Annabel explained once construction is complete, Spectrum releases the project to the sales department, and they can then offer service to households. Annabel thinks COVID-19 may be slowing down in-house

installation. Roger will call his Spectrum contact to check on the status of this project.

○ ~~**Mountain View and Arquette Way (complete December 2019)**~~

○ **Creek Road**

Now part of Spectrum Project No. 2118093 to serve 168 homes by September 2021.

○ **Turnbull Road**

Nelson Gage reported the southern end of Turnbull Road still needs broadband service and provided the house numbers to be included on the Committee's maps of unserved homes. He also stated there are 2 homes on Thousand Acres being built that will need service. Nelson uses an AT&T Homebase cellular internet connection and has noticed when more people are online the service slows down. He resolves this by doing downloads and work early in the morning.

Annabel explained the Committee is aware of lack of service on the south end of Turnbull Road. Charter was forced to serve the north end of Turnbull Road more than six years ago because of a complaint to the NYPSC by the residents at 1067 Turnbull. They were able to prove the density on Turnbull Road to their location was higher than the density of homes on Route 20 leading up to it. Therefore, under NYCRR Sec. 895.5 Time Warner had to provide service to them but did not continue the line further south.

○ **Humphrey Road**

Spectrum Project No. 1425879 – The last two homes on this dead-end street are expected to be served by Spectrum by April 2021.

○ **Suits Road**- Residents are encouraged to contact their elected officials to push for broadband service.

• Status of Verizon FIOS build with BPO Phase 3 funding in Duanesburg

○ ~~**Brahman's Corners south to Route 20**~~ (complete February 2020)

○ No Franchise Agreement will be offered to the Town with Verizon FIOS

○ **Millers Corners Road** - Roger will reach out to his contact at Verizon to check on the status of service to these homes.

• Status of Primary Service Area installations

○ **863 Turnbull Road** – Annabel confirmed for Roger that the new franchise agreement with Spectrum shortened the setback for service line at no additional charge to a household from 200 feet to 150 feet. During public hearings on the new agreement, however, representatives from Charter Communications made

clear that, on new construction, homeowners are generally not charged if setbacks are not more than 300 feet.

- **Assistance from NY Public Service Commission/BPO/Governor's office**
- **Assistance from Midtel**
MidTel will not be able to access any State funding to serve homes in Duanesburg until after September 2021 when Charter Spectrum is set to complete its buildout under the settlement agreement with the NYPSC.
- **Assistance from Senator Amedore**
- **Assistance from Assemblyman Santabarbara-**
Assemblyman Santabarbara's office has been helpful. Annabel plans to talk to his office to discourage approval of the recent rate increase request by National Grid because of their failure to move quickly on pole attachments for broadband providers.
- **Assistance from Congressman Paul Tonko**
Congressman Tonko's office is helpful. The Congressman's most recent effort was a letter request to FCC Chairman Ajit Pai outlining the adverse effects of COVID-19 shutdown on those of us with no broadband connection. Stories of several Duanesburg residents were included in the addendum to that letter.
- **Social Media initiative**
Annabel thanked John Ganther for maintaining the Facebook page and regularly updating it.
- **Next Broadband Meeting**
Our next Broadband meeting will be November 10th at 6:30 pm with Zoom. Hopefully, we will be able to update folks on the list of 168 Duanesburg homes to be served by Spectrum, if that information can be made public.