

MINUTES FROM THE SPECIAL INFORMATIONAL MEETING FROM 05/10/2021 FOR VOTE ON TWO ARTICLES

The meeting was held in the Bingo hall and via Zoom. Participants took part in both ways.

The following is the link to view the meeting:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/share/MF-1vW309LzKiBOnGyl4rhOPM6cyGco3TaszLKt2EwskomoRWxZs4XNxLFtpzPA-.F94W6nK-Y0AbPCnO?startTime=1620686924000>

PRESENT: (All in person) - Chairman, Lee Kimball, Shawn Creller, Russell Duchaine, Nicholas Palmer, Moderator, Terry Tatro, Clerk, Donna L. Bohannon

GUESTS: (Via Zoom) – Kathy Rochedieu, Ellen Vaillancourt, Tom Jacobson, Susan Smith, 802-395-1134

GUESTS: (In person) – Chris Lynch (Matrix Group), Ken Millman, Lance Newman, Lisa Newman, Elliot Knight, Mallory Ovitt, Lorna Jarvis, John Lapan

The meeting was opened at 7PM by Moderator, Terry Tatro, who read the articles as they were written before opening the floor for discussion.

ARTICLE #1:

Shall the voters authorize the Alburgh Selectboard to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Matrix Design Group, to pursue the construction and operation of a state-of-the-art broadband FTTH (Fiber to the Home) network in the Town of Alburgh. The network will be made available to all homes and businesses and will require Matrix to invest approximately \$2.73 million. The agreement also stipulates that the Town is responsible for the acquisition of the rights of way, estimated at \$869,000. The capital provided by the Town for the rights of way would be recouped through monthly subscriber fees.

- After reading the articles as written, Terry opened the floor to Chris Lynch from the Matrix Group to explain what is being proposed and to answer any questions that the public had.
- Chris began by introducing himself and handing out informational sheets that summarize the proposal. INFO
- He talked about the number of underserved areas and the amount of funding that is available to those areas.
- Chris explained that there are many grants available to assist with the costs associated with high-speed internet and that Matrix would assist Alburgh in applying for those grants.
- He explained that there are two tiers of service through Matrix and the difference between the two. The first tier being up to 100Mbps for \$95 per month and the second being up to 200 Mbps for \$155 per month.
- John Lapan asked if there was an additional fee to switch from one tier to the other in the event someone signed up for the lesser of the two Mbps and wanted to upgrade to the higher Mbps.
- Chris said that it would only require a phone call to make the switch.

- Chris also explained that process for building the network and the length of time it would take before subscribers could be connected. That time frame, start to finish (once approved and the build is underway) is 18-24 months with the first area being connect, possibly seeing service in 9 to 10 months.
- Lorna Jarvis asked if this was going to increase taxes and Chris said that it should not. The goal is that the subscribers would be the only ones paying for the service.
- Chris also explained that Matrix would require about 32% of residents (roughly 460) commit to signing on in during the “pre-subscription” period, to make it feasible to go forward with the build.
- The responsibility of the Town would be to provide the right of way for the areas that the build would be going to. The Town will also need to provide the building that will house the equipment.
- He also talked about other benefits of having better internet, such as phone service that is available through Matrix and television viewing options that would be increased due to better broadband.
- Ken Millman explained that Matrix does not provide television programing, but with better broadband, option like Hulu and Netflix more accessible.
- There was a question about availability on private roads and if it would be available on them.
- Chris replied that there would not be a distinction between private and public roads as long as the town provides the right of way for the company to run the lines.
- Chris was asked if there was a separate fee for seasonal users to which he replied that there would be a \$20 reconnection fee.
- Kathy Rochedieu asked if other Island Towns have been working with Matrix and she was told that they are not.
- Lisa Newman asked if there was a plan for what direction the fiber would start moving in.
- Chris answered that it would go in all directions at once. They would start from the central point and work outward in all directions. One group would begin laying the fiber out and as they progress, a second group would be connecting the lines to the users that sign up. He said that they complete about one mile per day.
- Kathy Rochedieu asked if the customers must wait until all the fiber is done before anyone is connected and Chris answered that no, people would be connected as the fiber goes by them.
- Elliot Knight asked if entering the MOU (Memorandum of Understanding) would require another vote of the people once the MOU was completed.
- He was informed that no, if the vote passed it would say that the voters are entrusting the Selectboard to enter into a good agreement with Matrix.
- Elliot also asked if his understanding of the cost was accurate. He asked if the worst-case scenario was that it would cost \$869,000, but that could potentially be zero money with various grants that are available.
- He was told that his understanding is correct.
- Chris stated that the town of Petersham MA did not have to raise any of the funds by taxation.
- It was noted that better internet could be enticing for businesses, which would help the local economy.
- Terry Tatro, Moderator, asked if there were any more questions on article #1.
- He did not here anymore discussion, so he moved on to article #2.

ARTICLE #2:

Shall the voters permit the operation of cannabis retailers in Alburgh, that are licensed by the State of Vermont under Act 164, beginning in October of 2022, such sales also being subject to any town ordinances or regulations that the town may lawfully adopt.

- John Lapan began the discussion by introducing himself and asking some questions about the logistics of fees and other items that could not be determined at that time.
- He talked about a group called growers helping growers and offered up ideas for how the town could profit from cannabis sales.
- His ideas were well received, but also slightly premature as the intent of the meeting was to help people understand what the vote was for.
- The vote, if passed, will be to allow cannabis retailers to set up a business in Alburgh, but by State law, that cannot happen until October 2022.
- He was encouraged to continue attending meetings as time progresses, so he is able to present other ideas to the Board.
- Kathy Rochedieu asked if the business that John is hoping to establish if the vote passes would be in the Village of Alburgh, or a general location in the town.
- John stated that there are a couple of locations he has been considering but hopes it will be on the main traveled roads for easy availability and visibility.
- Elliot Knight asked if a business fee is customary to which John replied he is not sure.
- There were questions about permitting fees and it was stated that without zoning it would be difficult to establish permitting.
- Moderator Tatro asked if there was any more discussion about either topic.
- None were heard –
- *At 8:26pm Donna L. Bohannon made a motion to adjourn – seconded by Shawn Creller – all in favor – motion carried – meeting adjourned.*

APPROVED BY:

MODERATOR – Terry A. Tatro



Date: 5/21/21

SELECTBOARD CHAIR – Lee Kimball

Date: _____