

# NOT APPROVED

## Alburgh Broadband Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes From Tuesday, December 21, 2021

### Agenda Items

1. Call to order and roll call:
  - a. Meeting called to order by Chair, Ken Millman at 6:04pm.
  - b. In Person—Municipal Office Conference Room-1 North Main St., Alburgh, VT 05440: J.R. Cox, Elliot Knight, Matthew LeFluer, Ken Millman, Kathy Rochedieu
  - c. Via Zoom: Due to lack of internet connection, there were no attendees via Zoom.
2. Public comment/visitor input:
  - a. Moved to later in the agenda, after “ABAC recommendations/updates for the Select Board.”
3. Ken Millman’s resignation from the Committee:
  - a. Tabled for after this Committee presents its update to the Selectboard on 1/12/2022.
  - b. There was discussion about J.R. Cox also resigning from this Committee because he is the Village of Alburgh representative for Northwest Fiberworx, (NWXF)—formerly Northwest Communications Union District, and this was also tabled for further discussion after the 1/12/2020 SB meeting.
4. Status of Matrix plan, and update on pre-subscriptions:
  - a. Elliot Knight reported that Chris Lynch of Matrix signed-up about 10 pre-subscribers at the Legion on 12/16.
  - b. Ken Millman reported that according to Matrix’s website, Matrix has reached 43% of the pre-subscription goal (198/460 subscribers) required by the end of 2021 for the project to move forward.
  - c. The Committee discussed the low rate of pre-subscriptions, and believes that residents consider the installation fee of \$400, and the monthly cost of \$95 for 100 mbps to be too expensive.
  - d. The Committee also expressed their concerns about the financial commitment to the Town of \$869,000, especially in light of the low number of pre-subscriptions.
5. Update on Northwestern Fiberworx (NWXF)—formerly Northwest Communications Union District:
  - a. Ken Millman reported that NWXF has made significant strides in the last few months on the path to bringing an affordable, open-access fiber network to the Member Towns—currently 18 communities, including Alburgh, Isle La Motte, North Hero, Swanton, St. Albans, Georgia, Milton,

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Highgate, Sheldon, Fairfield, Fairfax, Berkshire, Enosburg Falls, Enosburgh, Bakersfield, Richford and Montgomery. Some highlights include:

- i. Hiring a full-time Executive Director (Sean Kio)
  - ii. Recruiting a full-time Project/Operations manager, and part-time Administrative Assistant
  - iii. Securing major funds via a variety of grants and the Vermont Community Broadband Board to pay for a network design consultant, economic feasibility analysis, and an initial purchase of fiber-optic cable
  - iv. Several conversations and in-person meetings with a highly recognized and experienced retail ISP that is proposing to:
    1. Lease access to the NWFx fiber network for 50 years
    2. Offer subscribers a variety of plan options, the most basic being 100 mbps (up and down) for \$30/month
    3. Participate in an open-access model, meaning that other ISPs can also lease the network and solicit subscribers
- b. It is worth noting that the NWFx model does not require any money—\$0 (zero) dollars—from the Member Towns and Villages. The network buildout and operation will be funded via ISP lease payments, Federal and State grants, and a possible subscriber “surcharge.” In addition, the borrowing power of NWFx will be significant, pending the 50-year lease signing by the yet to be disclosed major ISP.
- c. It is also worth noting that a CUD may not accept funds generated by taxation from a town, nor can it levy any taxes or obligate the town in any debt.
6. ABAC recommendations/updates for the Select Board:  
After some discussion a motion was made by Kathy Rochedieu and seconded by Elliot Knight...“The Broadband Committee will meet with the Selectboard and update the SB on the Matrix pre-subscriptions, and the status of NWFx planning efforts and achievements to date, and recommend that the best path forward for both the Town and residents is via NWFx.” (Motion passed unanimously.)
7. Public comment/visitor input:
- a. Matthew Lefluer stated that “at the “time...” Matrix was the best (and only) fiber network option for Town.
  - b. Matthew LeFluer asked if the unnamed ISP will offer packages larger than 100/100 mbps, and Ken Millman said they’re planning to, but did not know the specifics. Ken will ask at the next NWFx Board meeting, and report back to the Committee.
  - c. Mattew LeFluer asked what the unnamed ISP will charge for installation. Ken Millman didn’t know, and he will ask at the next NWFx Board meeting, and report back to the Committee.

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8. Other business:

- a. Kathy Rochedieu asked if the Town has any legal liability on matters related to the Town relationship with NAFX. Ken said he didn't think so, but will try to find out and report back.
- b. Elliott Knight suggested that perhaps after the Committee meets with the SB, the Committee should be dissolved, or repurposed. This will be revisited after the Committee meets with the SB.

9. Adjourn:

Motion to adjourn made by Elliot Knight; seconded by J.R. Cox; meeting adjourned at 7:24pm.

*NOTE: These meeting minutes were written and submitted by Ken Millman, and have not yet been approved by ABAC.*