

**Town of Winchendon
Communications Committee Meeting Minutes
September 8, 2021
109 Front Street, Winchendon, MA 01475**

Present:

Ray Coe, Chairman
Guy Corboserio, Vice Chairman
Barbara Anderson, Secretary
Bill Clinton

Missing:

Greg Vine

Chairman Coe called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m. He informed the board that Linda Daigle was very busy today, but she would come downstairs if we needed her. He began the meeting with member comments. Barbara stated that she was reaching out to a student who may be interested in joining the committee, and with the committee's approval, she will have the student attend the next meeting before recommending her to the Board of Selectmen. Bill asked who was in charge of the information currently broadcast on Channel 8. He stated that there was some outdated information that needed to be updated. Ray stated that the school already has a channel of their own and it just needs to be hooked up. At this point, only Comcast is aware and is willing to reconnect it.

Ray stated that Comcast will be sending an informal contract and we will begin informal negotiations. The informal contract will be forwarded to the committee when it is received at Town Hall. He stated that he and Linda had been speaking with the representatives from Comcast for some time before the meeting started. Barbara stated that we need to look at Comcast subscribers, not just for television, but also internet subscribers for reimbursement from Comcast. Currently Comcast only recognizes television subscribers, and more and younger people are streaming and not subscribing to television. She said this trend needs to be reflected in our new contract. She also questioned the possibility of "streamers" to be able to stream the local access channels if they don't subscribe to cable television. Guy stated that currently, we don't have any other options in Winchendon.

Guy also brought up speaking to the Town Manager about using some pandemic money to expand the cable network in town. He said that there are currently several streets that do not have access to Comcast and they would like to, but it would be very expensive for each user to pay to have cable access extended. Barbara stated that she is also concerned with students' ability to access the internet in these areas. Guy stated that the houses on Rte. 140 and Foristall Road were without cable access and they would certainly welcome it.

Ray stated that the town would probably also be able to offer the senior citizen discount with the new contract. He said that we are also looking at negotiating a 5 year contract, rather than a 10

year contract due to the fact that technology changes so quickly. Guy mentioned that it is very difficult to hear people speaking at meetings. Ray replied that we have new speakers and as long as people are speaking into the microphones there shouldn't be a problem. It is important that the Chairs require people to speak into the microphones. It doesn't help to have people speak up, they have to speak into the microphone.

Ray stated that Zoom equipment through Comcast is very expensive, and he wants to make sure that it will be utilized. He stated that sometimes it is difficult to have the equipment maintained as our IT is not always in town when problems arise. We should have the hybrid equipment installed by mid-November. Bill said that his understanding is that the interest is to have the public be able to participate by Zoom if available. He wasn't sure if Governor Baker's extension would cover long term use. Barbara stated that there is interest throughout the state for public remote participation. There is some legislation being worked on at the State House to make the option permanent. She said that we have no idea when this pandemic will be over and we need to prepare.

Guy asked if members of the committee have to be a registered voter in Winchendon to serve on the committee. Barbara stated that there was no such requirement. She is interested in having a student's perspective on the committee, because a student is probably much more computer and technologically savvy. They would have more insight as to how to reach more people. It is also critical to not only expand the Town's communication, but also improve the school's communication within the community.

Barbara questioned the availability of equipment. She asked Bill if he communicated with Don O'Neil on a regular basis. Bill replied that they really haven't. Barbara stressed the importance of communication between the Town and School IT people. She stated that we really need to have an active inventory of equipment, a cohesive "wish list", and regular communication between the two. This would help expedite anticipated technology issues on both sides, as well as provide an avenue to work together. The goal is actually to get people off Facebook, and move them over to more positive venues, and that requires cooperation. Guy reinforced this idea, stating that we need some sort of an "information station", not so much a website, but something that provides information and is constantly updated. Bill replied that the school currently uses Parent Square and they have had some success with it. Unfortunately, that is not available to the community as a whole, rather just the school community.

Ray addressed the issue of a cable studio. Barbara stated that she prefers the upstairs hallway. There is ample space. She thought they may be able to make it so that the elevator cannot stop on the 3rd floor. Bill stated that they do not have any sort of studio any longer. They used to years ago, but what was there is long gone. There needs to be place for the schools to maintain the program should they obtain their own channel. Bill stated that he wasn't sure if they needed a mixer and other equipment at the school, or would they send it back to Town Hall for processing. Barbara questioned what the schools would do if Town Hall wasn't opened and they needed

access to the studio. She said maybe Don O'Neil would know that answer. She is absolutely certain that we do not have access to any editing equipment. Bill replied that was just a software issue. He said that these days it doesn't take a huge studio to do everything. Most things are easily obtained through software. Barbara asked Bill to speak with Mr. Collins to find out what he has and what he needs. She thought it was fabulous that the schools would get their own channel, but questioned if she wanted to watch a School Committee meeting, would she have to turn to the school channel, or would it still be on channel 8?

Guy stated that we have to create a list of all equipment that we currently have at both the Schools and Town Hall. Barbara said that would help us focus on what we have, what we need and what we want. Bill replied that he would be happy to take care of the school end and Ray volunteered to take care of the Town's inventory. Barbara brought up that the Town had recently purchased the Owl for hybrid meetings. Bill said they currently use that in Westminster and would be great to have. He also stated that you would need a second laptop to operate the Zoom meeting, which requires additional personnel to monitor.

The minutes of 6/9/2020 were tabled until the next meeting because no one printed them to be signed and approved. A discussion on the next meeting concluded with the meeting being held on October 6, 2021 at 4:00 p.m. Guy made a motion to adjourn at 4:45, and Barbara made the second. All members voted aye and the meeting was adjourned.

Approved on _____

JAN. 5, 2022

Ray Coe, Chairman

Guy Corbosiero, Vice Chair

Bill Clinton

Greg Vine

Barbara Anderson

Carmille Hart

Carmille Hart