

Broadband for Vienna

What we know, what we don't know and your concerns

What to do about Broadband in Vienna is not something that is going to get decided by the Selectboard or the Vienna Broadband Committee. It will be decided by the citizens of Vienna. We are just doing the homework. Please speak up during the questions and comments part of the meeting so that we know what you want to know before you vote to support further development of a vendor proposal at the annual Town meeting. NOTHING will get signed, no financial commitment made until and unless you vote your final approval at the special town meeting in late spring or early summer 2022.

Regardless of any action to broaden Vienna's Broadband access, NO-ONE will be required to switch from their existing service. If you are happy with what you have you will be free to keep it. No tax increase is currently being considered.

DISCLAIMER: Any numbers discussed tonight are subject to frequent changes.

What you will see and hear tonight

Brief overview of the project (15 minutes)

Please hold your questions for the Q&A session. If you need something to write on paper and pencils are available at the back of the room.

Your comments, questions and concerns (30 minutes)

At the end of the Q&A we will review the questions still to be answered and where we go from here (15 minutes)

Western Kennebec Lakes Community Broadband Association

Known as WKLCBA – started about 2 years ago

6 Towns working together to get Broadband Internet access to everyone in our towns who wants it
Vienna, Readfield, Mt Vernon, Fayette, Wayne, Leeds

Broadband Internet – fast, reliable Internet access of at least 25 mbps download and 3 mbps upload

25/3 is the “old” Federal standard – Feds and State have recently updated that standard to 100/100.

Huge grant funding available from the state and federal governments to make this happen. Securing grant funding requires that service proposals meet the current standard and provide a clear path for future increased needs.

Vienna is part of WKLCBA because bringing Broadband to towns as small and rural as ours is not something that has gotten/will not get much attention from network providers like CCI and Spectrum. Acting as part of the 6 town association gives us the leverage we need to get providers to pay attention to us.

Very little taxpayer money has been spent on the project so far. Most of the work has been done using various grant awards.

What were WKLCBA's Objectives, and have they been accomplished?

Original objectives:

- Ensure that all our residents have access to reliable, affordable Broadband (fast) Internet IF THEY WANT IT
- Broadband must meet the standard of available symmetrical speeds of 100/100mbps
- Availability of service must be provided to 100% of the potential subscribers
- Discounted service must be available for low-income households
- Aim for a single network solution serving all 6 towns. We hoped to use our combined size to leverage significant cost savings.

To meet those objectives, we first had to develop a Comprehensive Planning Report and several supporting documents including a survey of currently available services and a detailed utility pole inventory with mapping of prospective cable/fiber routings.

Issue a Request for Proposals to vendors who might provide the construction of the Broadband network and/or the ongoing maintenance and operation of the network once installed.

Where does WKLCBA fit into our picture from here forward?

On the preceding slide you saw what the goals and objectives of WKLCBA were from the start.

Not stated in the goals was a huge amount of education for the 20 or so people who represented the towns during the process. We didn't know what we didn't know and now we certainly do!

Also not stated in the original goals was the creation of a strong and lasting network of dedicated people in the 6 towns who will continue to support each other as the towns proceed to meet their Broadband goals.

As WKLCBA has progressed over the past 2 years we have learned that, although we originally hoped for a 6 town cooperative solution, it would not be possible to put together a single network solution that met the diverse needs of each town. Six towns, six unique sets of circumstances.

Including the revisions of some objectives (like a single 6 town network) WKLCBA has earned a A+ grade. We have achieved what we set out to do. From this point forward, each town will pursue their most appropriate Broadband solution based on the structure and knowledge developed by WKLCBA.

Some towns that will use similar solutions may choose to form smaller groups if that is mutually beneficial.

WKLCBA has been a resounding success. From this point forward, with voter support, it is up to each town to find their best individual Broadband solution. At the final planned meeting of WKLCBA on 2/10/22 the towns voted unanimously to move ahead individually. WKLCBA will assume an inactive status.

What level of service is currently available in Vienna?

With the possible exception of some satellite providers, Vienna residents cannot get any service that meets the 25/3 Broadband standard.

- **CCI claims to be able to deliver that service in some parts of town but in reality is unable to RELIABLY deliver anything above 10/1. Service more often falls below 3/1. CCI service is frequently disrupted.**
- **There is no cable available in Vienna**

CCI has no interest in improving service to any WKLCBA town and declined to provide a proposal in response to the RFP.

Towns that are underserved and unserved get highest priority for grant funding. By state and federal standards Vienna is both underserved and unserved.

Why do we “need” Broadband Internet?

Today many of us need Broadband Internet in our daily lives for:

- Education – particularly for our children and for adult education of many kinds
- E-mail and social media
- Telemedicine - visit with your doctors from home rather than driving to their offices
- Telecommuting - Work from home
- Social connections by video with our friends and family, near and far
- Entertainment (streaming services like Netflix, Prime, ESPN, YouTubeTV)
- Amazing source of how-to videos – learn to fix your car, make music, knit, woodworking, welding and find scarce parts
- Customer service has shifted overwhelmingly to videos on the Internet. This will become not just an option but THE way to get the best customer service in the near future.
- Because starting in about 10 minutes and increasing every day, week and month in the future, the availability of Broadband Internet will be assumed by pretty much everyone you want to communicate with in any way. If Vienna does not have Broadband we will be living at a significant disadvantage. Whatever level of service (including none) you have today will not meet your needs tomorrow.

What are our options for Broadband?

Construction of a fiber to the home network

- Well proven, common in Maine, favored by granting agencies because it will serve well in the future

Extension of cable service into our town

- Not an option, Spectrum has proposed to offer fiber based service in Vienna.

Fixed base wireless using new technology

- Attractive and cost effective but not well demonstrated in New England, dependent on a single source in California for the required technology and on a single vendor in Maine to install and maintain it.

Satellite service

- Generally, not up to the Federal standard
- Expensive to install and provides lower service levels for the same or more monthly \$
- Spotty availability

Who will own the Broadband network?

Two Choices

Municipally (town) owned

- Requires larger up front capital contribution from Vienna
- Initial monthly subscriber fees about the same as if owned by Broadband Company
- 5 year outlook is for higher service speeds at lower monthly cost
- Town has responsibility (\$) for operation and maintenance of the network

Owned by Broadband company

- Requires lower up front capital contribution from Vienna
- Initial and 5 year monthly subscriber fees may be higher for any given level of service
- Most Broadband companies offer an option for the town to buy the network after 3 to 5 years. The option to buyout remains until the end of 20 years at which point the town can buy the network for \$10.

How would a Broadband network get paid for?

Maine will receive more than \$300 MILLION in Federal money to fund Broadband expansion – grants will probably cover 70% of the town's total contribution

We estimate that grants may cover up to 70% of the capital cost. Vienna will be responsible for the remaining capital cost.

At the present (January 2022) time the Selectboard favors a municipal bond to cover the town's contribution. The intent is that the bond will be paid off solely by subscriber fees. No tax increase is currently being considered.

What do we know so far from the proposals?

Vendor	Ownership		Network	Comments
Axiom	Municipal		Fiber	Well demonstrated in Maine
Matrix	Municipal		Fiber	Well demonstrated in New England, building in Weld and Wilton
Matrix	Vendor		Fiber	Well demonstrated in New England, building in Weld and Wilton
Spectrum	Vendor		Fiber	Unknown fiber track record, will not provide any improvement in service to existing cable customers in other member towns of WKLCBA. Will not guarantee service levels.
RedZone	Vendor		Fixed Wireless	Not Demonstrated in Maine, based on very new, lightly installed technology

What do you get as a subscriber?

You get a wire and/or a receiver coming into your home that provides an Internet connection

- You will be able to “surf the net” and get any free content like YouTube, music, weather, radio many e-mail services, and some streaming entertainment that contains ads.

Fee services like Netflix, Prime, Hulu, ESPN, YouTubeTV (streaming) are NOT included in the basic connection

- Whatever fee services you want, you pay for. There are no “package” offerings that include TV or streaming services

Essentially the same *content* you now get from a CCI DSL line but far superior speed and reliability

Some Broadband providers in other towns (maybe satellite in Vienna) offer a package of services for varying monthly fees. Some of those bundles include the fee based streaming services in with the cost of the Internet connection. None of the optional services are included in the Broadband proposals we are reviewing.

If you want Internet phone services (VOIP) you can get it at an extra cost

ALL RIGHT ALREADY! HOW MUCH A MONTH IS Broadband GOING TO COST ME?

We don't have that answer yet. We don't have ANY truly complete proposals as of January 2022.

CCI currently provides the great majority of Internet service in Vienna. The monthly costs vary widely depending on the speed of your service AND when you signed up. Different customers pay different amounts to CCI for the same service levels. On average CCI DSL is costing around \$75/month for 10/1 service (if you can get it)

There are a few Starlink satellite customers in town who pay \$99/month

Based on what we know now, the average customer will likely pay \$75/month or less for Broadband Internet that will be far faster and more reliable than current options. Low income customers will receive a \$30 monthly reduction. Those guidelines are included on the last page of the hand out tonight and will be on Vienna.org by tomorrow, 2/16

Now it's your turn – what are your concerns?

We will not be offering any further cost estimates tonight either for capital cost or monthly subscriber service because:

- The RFP responses are incomplete. Considerable work needs to be done before a firm proposal is available.
- The consultant (Casco Bay Advisors) who has worked with WKLCBA throughout the project has advised that we would likely put ourselves at a significant negotiating disadvantage if vendors learn what other vendors have offered. So, we're keeping mum for the moment.

We will stay as long as you want BUT

- Please say what you've got to say once and then give others a turn.
- We will write down EVERY concern and question. We will try to address them in the next two weeks IF THE ANSWERS ARE AVAILABLE. Some information is developing slowly and will not be complete for several weeks or months.

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What happens now?

This is a very complex project and it is not a surprise that the RFP responses leave unanswered questions. We are working with several vendors to clarify and firm up their proposals.

There is an article on the Warrant for the Town Meeting (March 11-12, 2022) to authorize the Selectboard to negotiate one or more contracts to provide Broadband Internet service in Vienna. Any contract will be presented to a special town meeting for resident approval before final acceptance.

Likely wording of the 2022 Town Meeting Warrant Article:

“Shall the Select Board of the Town be authorized to negotiate one or more agreements for the provision of high-speed internet service to all Vienna residents through one or more third party service providers, with any final agreement(s) and funding to be approved at a special town meeting this summer (2022).”

First meeting of the Citizens Broadband Committee is the week of February 21 or Feb 28 at the convenience of the Committee. We are looking for more members, those who are pro-Broadband and those who are not. We would particularly like to get representatives of families with school age children. Anybody interested in joining that group?