

Joint Committee on Broadband

Brussels, Union, Gardner, and Forestville

11/15/2023 Broadband Public Meeting (SDHS) Recap

We'd like to start by saying thank you for the participation we had at the meeting at the Southern Door High School Auditorium on November 15, 2023. It was our first attempt at a public forum and gave us an opportunity to not only share who we are and what we've been doing, but also to receive feedback. We felt it appropriate to do an after-meeting recap where we address some of the items brought to our attention during the meeting and also emphasize some of the areas, we felt were important takeaways. Let's get started...

The Brussels, Union, Gardner, and Forestville (BUGF) Broadband Committee is an advisory committee to the 4 town boards. Our purpose is to provide them with information and recommendations for procuring broadband internet for all their residents so they can best choose how to proceed. We also, on their behalf, assist with the education of the public so residents remain informed. The committee itself has no authority to enter into any agreements/contracts and each individual town government will proceed in the way they feel best on behalf of their residents. Currently the consensus of the Town Boards seems to be bringing this project to a referendum vote at the April 2nd, 2024, spring election.

Grants are an all or nothing venture without any guarantees of receiving one. You apply for a set amount of dollars and either get awarded the full amount or you get nothing. They won't negotiate to come to terms. Not only do applicants have to follow strict criteria for applying but they also are evaluated in a selection process. Those that ask for smaller amounts and/or that are willing to invest more of their own money asking for a smaller percentage of the total project are generally more favored in the selection process.

The project was split into 2 phases due to grant availability. Phase 1 was to take advantage of the November 7th deadline CPF (Capital Projects Fund) grant. The CPF grant included unserved and underserved households. Phase 1 included only Gardner because it was the most strategically advantageous township for Brightspeed to partner with while taking advantage of the grant. The grant request was submitted before its deadline and asked for approximately 66% of the total project cost. If a grant is not awarded Gardner will move into phase 2.

Phase 2 takes advantage of the BEAD (Broadband Equity Access and Development program) funding grant. The BEAD grant includes ONLY unserved households and requires at least a 25% match to qualify as a minimum. Brightspeed's proposal includes a 50% project ask from the BEAD grant process. They feel confident that the 50% ask is not excessive and we are following their recommendation at this time. Brightspeed is committing 25% towards the project which in turn would place the remaining 25% as the responsibility of the Towns. The individual Towns may choose to commit more or less toward the project cost. This in turn would raise or lower

the asking percentage amount and potentially put them in better or worse favor in the selection process where a lesser ask is favored.

There were several questions for Brightspeed that the representative was going to “find out”. We will have another update or addendum to this recap with their responses. Know that your questions are important to us, so we want to get them answered but we also wanted to get this out to you as close to the meeting date as possible to aid in transparency.

For those of you who want to view the Power Point Presentation used during the Public Presentation at the Southern Door School Auditorium, please visit your appropriate town websites, listed below, for the Power Point Presentation, and FAQ’s. We had the wrong Town Values being used in the presentation on 11/15/23 and have since corrected the error with the current 2023 Assessed Values for each Town. Our Apologies for this error.

These new numbers also include the recommended 50% BEAD grant ask which significantly impacts the Towns burden compared to our original slides. Please remember the original slides had the grant amount set to \$0 to show worst case scenario where the town would absorb all but Brightspeeds contribution. When reviewing these numbers, you may see the percentages do not work out exactly, this is because the BEAD grant only includes unserved households. Households that are underserved or served are not included as part of the 50% ask but remain part of the total project cost shared equally and reflected in both the Brightspeed and town totals. Lastly, the numbers are fluid at the moment and may change as more information is obtained and addresses verified. For now, they serve as a good reference before our March 13, 2024, meeting where we should have more precise values.

Our goals as a committee are to provide as many facts and as much information as possible on the subject of **High-Speed Broadband Internet Service** for Brussels, Union, Gardner, and Forestville. You will find in the Power Point Presentation all the information concerning which Internet Service Providers had been contacted to participate in the project, and which of those responded to the Request for Proposals for the project. The WISER survey and the local town surveys are also found in the Power Point Presentation. Cost projections, along with the amortization and effective Tax Rate per \$1000 for each Town is also available in the Power Point.

We continue to work behind the scenes collecting information, developing Resolutions, and Referendums to be placed on the April 2nd Election Ballot. We ask for your continued patience as we attempt to do our due diligence for the development of this project. Thank You.

Chairman Jon Koch
Joint Broadband Committee / B.U.G.-F.

Please visit your Town websites for the Power Point Presentation and FAQ's below:

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