

Bourne Cable, Internet and Telecommunications Advisory Committee

Special meeting to review the Cape Cod Commission's draft Digital Equity Plan and prepare letter from Select Board in response; initial discussion of Boundless proposal to Falmouth

Minutes

Date: 3/14/2024

Time: 0800

Location: Zoom

Zoom Meeting ID: 815 8788 2013

Zoom Meeting Password: CABLE

The Zoom chat will not be monitored. Participants who wish to speak must raise the hand icon until the Chair asks them to unmute. If anyone is audio or visual recording, please acknowledge it at this time.

- 1) **Call Meeting to Order, and Attendance: Present:** Mr. Dwyer, Mr. Frank, Ms. Howland, Mr. McCarter, Ms. Siroonian, *ex officio*; Public: Jen McGrail, BCTV. **Absent:** Mr. Contrino, Mr. Johnson
- 2) **Review and Approval of Minutes as amended from 3/7/2024 meeting pending for consideration at scheduled 3/21/2024 meeting.** Note that all meetings are recorded and can be accessed in full from BCTV.
- 3) **Review the Cape Cod Commission's draft Digital Equity Plan** In collaboration with various entities, the Town will need to allocate some funds for supplementary staff, fixing/extending the Library WiFi, purchasing equipment for rental to residents who need it, and upgrading equipment for school students.
 - a. Ask CCC for support of declaring all of Cape Cod underserved
 - b. Ask the Cape Cod Commission (CCC) for recommendations and help. CCC can offer support to Select Board to help them develop a plan to move forward. They already supply IT tech support to the Town and can put together a roadmap for further action.
 - c. Specific items for Select Board to request from CCC:
 - i. better data on school-aged population, can trigger positive actions by grantors
 - ii. specific data on ages of town population
 - iii. mass mailing to every household to obtain a truer sense of what residents' needs are
When Falmouth did this (with financial assistance from their State House rep) the returns are what convinced their Select Board to move forward to support the MLP when they had not initially favored it. Does the CCC consider this good data?
 - d. Town's position, Ms. Siroonian: Will write grant with help, e.g., from CCC and CITAC. Grant can include administrative and secretarial assistance. Anticipate using CCC fellowship to assist with administration after grant is obtained
 - e. This needs to be put before the Select Board before their next meeting for a decision due to 3/25/2024 deadline for comments. The goal is to give them feedback to get them closer to the "how" of implementation for a developed plan to address DEI in Bourne.
- 4) CITAC can work with independent bodies not under direct control of Select Board: School Department to decide what they need: ChromeBook insurance; speed tests; other issues. Ask for their needs in support of plan moving forward. Library Trustee board has contacted Mr. Dwyer to help.

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- 5) An extensive discussion of issues related to the Boundless proposal to Falmouth for a community fiber network:
 - a. future-proofing with negotiating contract terms favorable to the town, e.g., control after investment is repaid; equity, sustainability, exit; Mr. Dwyer will contact Jim Newman to discuss in general terms
 - b. town support for Boundless grant applications to help offset their initial costs
 - c. ask about an extension to Pocasset/Cataumet; this would mean a smaller extension than to some areas of Falmouth they've already committed to.
 - d. Performance bond for construction phase
 - e. Boundless will attend next Cape Cod Technology Council meeting to discuss; Mr. Dwyer will attend.

Next Meeting Date 3/21/2024 , via Zoom

Future Agenda Items: Followup on above items as indicated

Adjourn Regular Session, moved and seconded, passed unanimously, adjourned @ 1030.
Wendie Howland, Clerk

Attachments: Draft of letter for Select Board's consideration

The Bourne Select Board is pleased to provide comments on the Commission's draft Digital Equity Plan for Bourne, as per your request. For your convenience, our responses are in order of the topics in the draft report as received on March 4, 2024.

Existing Digital Equity Conditions

The report presents a general overview of the demographic and geographic conditions affecting digital equity in Bourne. However, although we recommend that the report present more detail on the specific stakeholder groups and their locations in Bourne, these are indeed, issues affecting the entire Cape.

- Based on data and maps (Fig. 6, page 21), the Commission should state unequivocally, that all of Bourne is underserved (exception, downtown Buzzards Bay). Based on other statements in the report, the rest of the Towns on Cape Cod are too; this should be explicit in the final report.
- The maps of service coverage are clearly inaccurate, apparently based on ISP reports. E.g., Wing's Neck is noted to have extensive broadband coverage from multiple reliable providers, but this is not true. Sagamore is also noted as having multiple providers, but in fact does not.
- The report notes gaps in the data available for review. We request that the Cape Cod Commission be more specific about the types and quality of acceptable data required to target applications to appropriate grants. For examples, mailed surveys to all resident and seasonal households; ChromeBooks to all public school children (middle school and above), with software to document speed testing, i.e., upload/download, latency, and reliability in all areas of town year-round; or other.

Community Engagement

- We applaud the Cape Cod Commission's efforts to engage community members, but the turnout for your open meetings was remarkably low. Few private citizens, i.e., only four people not on advisory or town committees, attended. The timing for these was a significant problem. The home-bound, the elderly, the non-drivers, the people still at work or at home with small children, our large seasonal population—none of these groups were able to participate in any meaningful way. This underrepresentation also missed accounting for the areas in town with the largest seasonal population. These are significant deficits when attempting to compile comprehensive data.

Key Findings

- Your finding that there is "*unreliable and spotty internet and cellular service across Bourne*" describes Bourne as "*largely underserved.*" Data you present in the plan documents that the Town of Bourne *as a whole* is underserved per the definitions by Digital Equity/ARPA, Gap, and BEAD grant programs. (Appendices regarding specific areas, e.g., Sagamore/Sagamore Beach, should clarify this further in the final report.) We recommend that this fact be added to the heading in the report.
- Barriers to adequate service as reported anecdotally by members in all areas of town are well-described in your report.
- You note that "*Capacity and funding challenges impact an entity's ability to develop and maintain new programs, enhance currently existing programs to better meet community needs, and develop the time-intensive partnerships or resources required to further streamline efforts*

and build a resource network. (p. 37)” It is not clear to what this refers: a path to navigate to a solution, examples of action steps on how to accomplish a better result, resources and funding sources to be sought and applied? We need specifics on all of these.

Implementation

- Obtain more specific data. More, or focused, speed testing would improve the accuracy of the data needed to implement any plan.
- The Cape Cod Commission should obtain more granular data on specific populations or areas to identify barriers to digital equity for each, or facilitate ways to do this in Bourne via funding, tech support, staffing, or other advice.
- Please provide a strong outline with specifics for a county-wide master plan to help Bourne address our digital equity divide.
- Digital navigators can help assemble and advise a digital equity network in Bourne, when conditions are met, possibly in coordination with other towns. We need detailed specific information to derive such a plan. Please supply a specific description for an ideal such network.

Thank you for your kind attention to our concerns. We would be pleased to address any questions you have in more detail.

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