

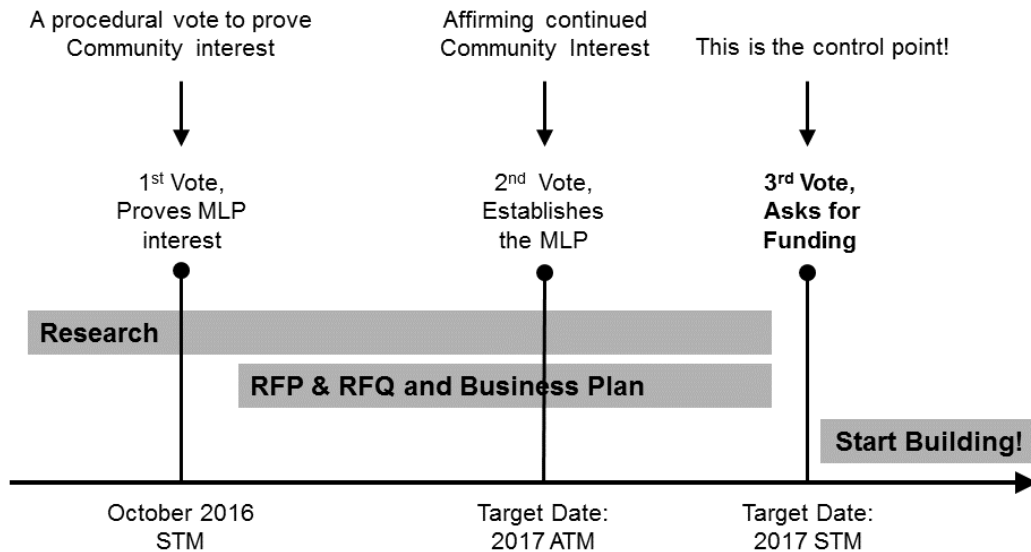
Status Report to the Board of Selectmen Town of Harvard Broadband Committee

2/4/2017

The Broadband Committee has a two-year charge from the Board of Selectmen to research the feasibility and develop a proposal for a municipal fiber-optic broadband network for the Town of Harvard. If found to be feasible and approved by the Board of Selectmen and the Town, the Committee would be responsible for the development of plans, budgets, financing, building and commissioning the operation of the service.

Sufficient members to form a quorum were appointed in July 2016, and the Committee held its first meeting on August 5th, 2016. The project timeline is shown in the following figure:

The Project Timeline



The first major project milestone is citizen approval of a Municipal Light Plant (MLP), a no-cost legal entity that enables the creation of a municipal Internet Service Provider (ISP). As defined by MA Law Chapter 164, two separate votes are required to affirm the Town's support to create an MLP. The creation of an MLP does not obligate the Town in any way; it enables the Town's option to have a municipal ISP in the future if voter approved. We thank the Town for its approval in the first vote. This outcome was supported by the Committee's communications efforts, including public presentations and outreach as well as the creation of the harvardbbc.org website to keep the public informed.

The Committee developed a strategy to use the time made available by the two required votes to perform due diligence in three areas:

- Best practices and lessons learned from the other 42 MLP ISP efforts currently underway in MA. We have established ongoing contact with several of the initiatives and gained significant insight from their efforts.
- Estimating the capital cost required for infrastructure using available public Geographical Information System (GIS) sources, including the availability of existing fiber optic cabling already present in Harvard.
- Estimating the market acceptance (take rate) of a competitive (non-exclusive) municipal Fiber-to-the-Home/Business (FTTX) ISP, including the adoption rates for classes of services and possible pricing.

This research is essential for the definition of viable options, including a business plan for a Municipal Broadband Internet.

Our primary objectives for 2017 remain the same as our original plan, and we will examine adding additional stretch goals, depending upon our progress and discoveries:

- Prepare for the second vote of approval for the creation of a Harvard MLP. We will actively keep the community informed of our progress and findings, and we ask that everyone support this critical step with their affirmative vote.
- Complete the research initiatives (including direct surveys) and develop options to bring ISP competition to Harvard. One of the options will include a business plan for a Harvard MLP FTTX ISP.
- Deliver a business plan to the Board of Selectmen for their evaluation and consent for presentation to the Town for voter approval.
- Investigate feasibility of staged deployment of the FTTH network using the existing dark-fiber.

In the attached appendix, you will find preliminary results of our efforts in three key areas: preliminary results of the customer survey, estimating fiber-optic line lengths using MassGIS database, and feedback from other MLPs.

The committee still has an unfilled seat and is looking to add additional finance skills to complement our current roster. Please consider joining the committee if your background is in finance.

We thank the Board of Selectmen and our community for the support of in bringing better Internet services to our Town!