

Further Information

1. Overview of the Broadband Committee

a. Members

- i. Michael Porter, Chair
- ii. Rickard Hackel
- iii. David Hill
- iv. Aaron Julien
- v. Adam Kagan
- vi. Hugh Kellam
- vii. Gary Oderda

b. Process

- i. The Broadband Committee was appointed by the Town Board of Selectmen to create a recommendation on how the Town should proceed with a project to improve broadband access to the Island. The Committee will evaluate the needs of the community and work with potential providers to obtain proposals for fiber optic wiring throughout the Island and high-speed home connections to the internet.

c. Outcome

- i. The Broadband Committee will produce a report with a recommendation to the Town.

2. Goal Statement

a. Describe goals of Broadband project

- i. Access - The project would install Fiber-optic lines to all customers and homes on the island that want it. Customers are not required to sign up for the new service, but installation of all lines on all properties would be included in the agreement.
- ii. Speed - This reliable system would provide much-needed bandwidth to Chebeague. Each subscriber would receive their total bandwidth purchased even in the heaviest usage times in the summer months. This would not be an “up to” or “best effort” service. The system will be built to deliver symmetrical service to each home, (same speeds uploading and downloading). If you subscribe to receive 500/500Mbps- you will be able to test that, day or night, summer, or winter.
- iii. Cost
 1. Affordable - subscribers can choose to maintain the same cost and speed they are currently paying, or upgrade to a much faster 50/50Mbps Fiber-optic system that would be available on a seasonal or yearly basis. The cost of the faster system would only be 10-15% higher than current levels and can be upgraded easily in years to come.
 2. Potentially subsidized for low income - The Town would work closely with the chosen Internet service provider and partner to

find funding to create an Affordability Fund, to support families for whom internet access is a financial hardship..

3. Why Broadband is Important and why Fiber?
 - a. The island needs more working-age people. After the pandemic, more work will still be done remotely, and current internet access is not sufficient
 - b. DSL will not provide sufficient speed or bandwidth
 - c. 5G is not available and will not likely provide adequate speed to Chebeague
 - d. Satellite provides good download speed but has latency problems, is expensive and is subject to weather related issues
4. The Funding Process
 - a. Fiber optic cable installation will be funded through government grants and bonds. These bonds will be paid by the internet service provider (Axiom or Consolidated) through user fees.
 - b. Some limited initial one time support will be provided by the Town of Chebeague Island. These costs are expected to be recovered within the first year of service.
 - c. There will be no property tax increase needed to fund this project. Grants and the bond will cover the initial start-up costs. Any expenditures from the Town will be provided with the existing tax base. Other small municipalities have already had great success using this model.
 - d. Low-income family subsidy option. Chebeague could emulate a successful program in Longmont, Colorado. This municipally-owned service offers no-cost internet service funded entirely by donation requests on each bill for those who can afford giving an extra amount to the program:
<https://www.longmontcolorado.gov/departments/departments-e-m/longmont-power-communications/sharing-the-nextlight> We could set up a similar program that gives qualified families on Chebeague low-cost or free service.
5. Costs and Speed
 - a. Current DSL download speeds nationally vary by location but are generally in the 5–35 Mbps range. Upload speeds are usually in the 1–10 Mbps range. Speeds on Chebeague are closer to 10Mbps download and 2Mbps upload. The reliability of connections on Chebeague is not great, particularly during peak periods in the summer and on holidays.
 - b. Expected speeds for the new Fiber service will begin at 50/50Mbps (or close to 10X the current average), and subscription plans will provide options for up to 500/500 MB or higher.
 - c. Expected cost will be similar to existing slower service or minimally higher, likely in the range of 10-15% higher for the 50/50Mbps service, which is plenty of bandwidth for a home using a full range of television, videoconference and web surfing applications.
6. How is this different from the broadband vote that failed in 2019?
 - a. The 2021 Committee has learned from the previous committee, incorporated good ideas included and improved upon them
 - b. Conditions have changed dramatically with increased availability of federal and state funding.

- c. The new proposal will be generally paid for with grant money and user fees, not Town tax money.
 - d. Town will borrow part of the cost using low-interest municipal funding which will be repaid by the Internet service provider, not by taxpayers
 - e. Town may incur some cost (TBD) during buildout phase. These costs will be covered by already approved appropriations and will not result in an increase in taxes
7. What happens if I need a repair?
- a. Even though the town will own the cables, the internet service provider will provide timely maintenance and repair services.
 - b. Customers can contact the ISP directly for service issues.