



Selectmen's Office

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June 28, 2021

Carroll County Commissioners
95 Water Village Road
Ossipee, NH 03864

Dear Commissioners:

As you suggested to Julie Dolan from our Broadband Advisory Committee at your recent meeting, the Town of Sandwich respectfully submits this request to fund a state-of-the-art, "future-proof," fiber-optic broadband network that will serve 100 percent of the Town's residents with fast, reliable, symmetrical (equal download/upload speeds), and competitively priced internet service. The total cost for this project is \$3,542,700. (See attached worksheet.) With expeditious funding we're told it could be operational within six months.

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated the urgent need for fast, reliable internet service. Not only will such service be necessary to cope with the unpredictable course of this continuing pandemic, but it will be instrumental in recovering from the pandemic's effects, in dealing with future threats to the community's public health and safety, and in positioning Sandwich to function successfully in a post-pandemic world.

The Town of Sandwich has identified the lack of broadband level internet service as our highest-priority need – a problem only intensified by this past COVID-dominated year.

Our year-round population of 1,350 residents nearly quadruples in the summer and is widely dispersed over 100 miles of rural roads. Our low population density requires high build-out costs per household served. Without significant funding subsidy, this makes for discouraging return-on-investment for any broadband developer who might be willing to partner with us.

The vast majority of Sandwich residents have no access to broadband level service (defined by the Federal Communications Commission as 25 Mbps down/3 Mbps up). Our town has **no** cable service, and our topography is too forested and mountainous for reliable wireless service. Most residents who have internet service access it through deteriorating copper phone lines via DSL provided by the phone company, an intrinsically slow technology that is obsolete and unreliable.

Less than 13% of residents can attain speeds of 25 Mbps/3 Mbps, and even that service is very unreliable. Those familiar with the connectivity landscape of New Hampshire tell us Sandwich is one of the internet-neediest towns in the entire State. The attached graph starkly illustrates our

predicament; the data comes from a survey done by the Carroll County Broadband Committee in October 2020.

Our project's approach is to partner with a commercial internet service provider to plan, construct, and operate a fiber-optic broadband network serving all Sandwich residents. Our small town does not have the capacity to take on this project alone. We are in discussions with two potential partners but have no formal contract at this time.

We have applied for funding through proposed congressional earmark appropriations as well as with the Northern Border Regional Commission. However, these potential funding sources are highly competitive and have funding caps that would cover only a fraction of the project cost. (Attached please find two cost estimates from potential providers.)

The Sandwich Broadband Advisory Committee, established in May 2019, has conducted extensive research and solicitation of public views. The Committee has determined that fast, reliable, affordable internet service is crucial to the community's viability.

A 21st-century internet service will:

- Encourage economic and business development and add value to the real estate base (and thus support the Town's tax base);
- Enable remote working;
- Provide online access to higher education and training;
- Allow effective, dependable home schooling of our children and facilitate hybrid models of classroom/remote learning that are expected in the post-pandemic era;
- Enhance public health communication and public safety;
- Mitigate out-migration of citizens to areas of better connectivity;
- Increase residents' health care access through telehealth technology that has become prevalent during the pandemic and will remain an essential pillar of health care going forward;
- Facilitate civic engagement;
- Support innovation and outreach in the arts, already a hallmark of Sandwich, and an area of considerable potential expansion; and
- Enrich residents' lives and sense of community through instantaneous connection within Sandwich and with the wider world.

With adequate broadband service, and bandwidth that can expand to meet future needs, we expect Sandwich children would return here after their schooling to live, work and raise families. Home-based businesses would grow and thrive. And older residents with access to quality telehealth could stay in town and age in place. These effects will translate directly into sustainable economic benefits for residents, the Town, Carroll County and the State of NH.

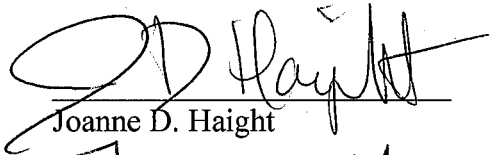
Without broadband, the economic, civic and social life of our community will wither.

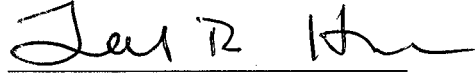
It's hard to overstate the necessity of government subsidy for this project. Market forces won't bring high speed internet to rural communities like ours. That's why investment in rural broadband has become recognized as a necessary, appropriate and non-partisan use of state and federal funds.

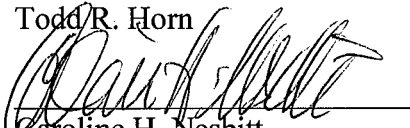
Of note, the Town of Sandwich Select Board has voted to devote the Town's allotment of ARPA funds to broadband. As you know, all 10 county governments and the 118 towns in NHEC's service area recently received a letter from the Co-op laying out its broadband plans. (Copy attached.) The NHEC letter asks counties and towns to consider allocating their ARPA funds to that ambitious project, in whole or in part. We attach a letter of support from NH Broadband, the Co-op's recently established subsidiary. NHEC is one of the potential partners with whom we have been discussing our needs and expectations.

We appreciate your expeditious consideration of this request as deserving of highest priority in the allocation of a portion of the \$9 million in ARPA funds coming to Carroll County. Broadband Advisory Committee Chair Julie Dolan and other Town officials stand ready to provide whatever additional information you require in completing this important and urgent task.

Respectfully,


Joanne D. Haight


Todd R. Horn


Caroline H. Nesbitt

Sandwich Board of Selectmen

Attachments:

1. Contact info
2. Budget worksheet
3. Carroll County Broadband Project Survey, Page 3
4. Estimate response – NHEC
5. Estimate response – Consolidated Communications, Inc.
6. NH Broadband letter to Towns and Counties
7. Letter of Support – NHEC/ NH Broadband

Town of Sandwich, NH

Contact Info:

Julie Dolan, Chairman
Broadband Advisory Committee
jdolan6233@gmail.com
603-677-2521
603-284-6233

Catherine Graham (before August 2, 2021)
Courtney Delaney (after July 19, 2021)
Director of Administration, Town of Sandwich
tos@cyberpine.net
PO Box 194
C. Sandwich, NH 03227
603-284-7701

Joanne Haight, Chairman
Sandwich Select Board
joannedh8@gmail.com
603-505-2937

APPLICANT'S NAME Town of Sandwich

OMB Approval No. 0348-0041

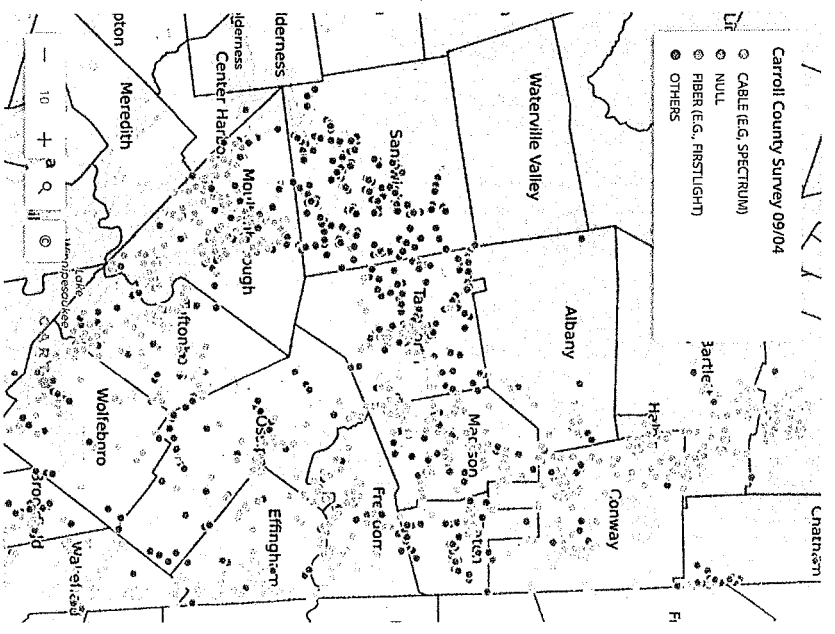
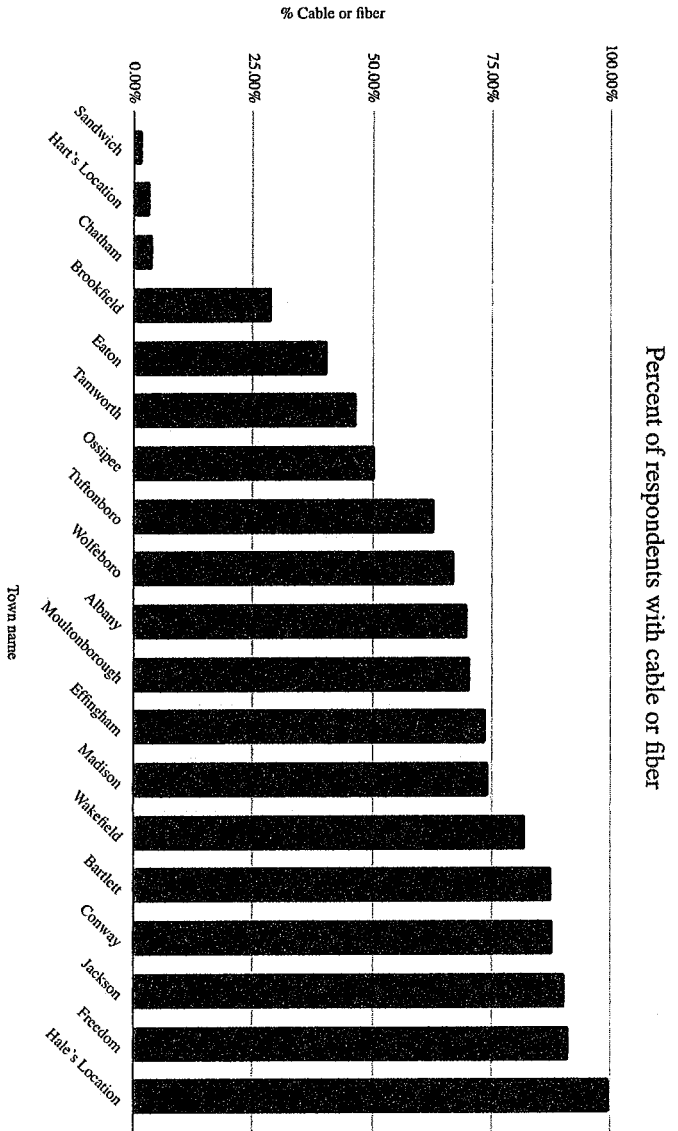
BUDGET INFORMATION - Construction Programs

NOTE: Certain Federal assistance programs require additional computations to arrive at the Federal share of project costs eligible for participation. If such is the case, you will be notified.

COST CLASSIFICATION	a. Total Cost	b. Costs Not Allowable for Participation	c. Total Allowable Costs (Columns a-b)
1 Administrative and legal expenses	\$20,000.00		\$20,000.00
2 Land, structures, rights-of-way, appraisals, etc.			\$0.00
3 Relocation expenses and payments			\$0.00
4 Architectural and engineering fees	\$218,000.00		\$218,000.00
5 Other architectural and engineering fees			\$0.00
6 Project inspection fees	\$237,000.00		\$237,000.00
7 Site work	\$863,000.00		\$863,000.00
8 Demolition and removal			\$0.00
9 Construction	\$1,781,000.00		\$1,781,000.00
10 Equipment			\$0.00
11 Miscellaneous	\$255,000.00		\$255,000.00
12 SUBTOTAL	\$3,374,000.00		\$3,374,000.00
13 Contingencies	\$168,700.00		\$168,700.00
14 SUBTOTAL	\$3,542,700.00		\$3,542,700.00
15 Project (program) income			\$0.00
16 TOTAL PROJECT COSTS (subtract #15 from #14)	\$3,542,700.00		\$3,542,700.00
FEDERAL FUNDING			
17 Federal assistance requested, calculated as follows: (Consult Federal Agency for Federal percentage share.)	Enter	Enter eligible costs from line 16c Multiply X 28%	\$1,000,000.00

the resulting Federal share.

Access to cable and fiber varies by town





579 Tenney Mountain Highway
Plymouth, NH 03264-3154
www.nhec.com
603-536-1800

May 12, 2021

Julie Dolan
Chair, Town of Sandwich Broadband Advisory Committee
PO Box 194
Center Sandwich, NH 03227

Dear Ms. Dolan,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide information in support of the Town of Sandwich's grant application to the Northern Border Regional Commission. NHEC stands ready to assist the Town in its efforts to obtain additional sources of funding to support the construction of a fiber optic network to serve the entire community.

We believe that NHEC is ideally suited to partner with the Town, and the Co-op has already committed to the construction of a fiber optic network to the unserved areas of Sandwich through our participation in the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) Rural Digital Opportunity Fund (RDOF) auction last year. We understand and appreciate that the Town is seeking to provide fiber optic internet service to the entire community, and that it be done as quickly as possible.

As NHEC continues to develop our larger broadband construction strategy, the availability of grants and community interest are key factors that we consider in the timing of our plans. NHEC has shown the ability and willingness to move quickly, through our participation in the Connecting New Hampshire Emergency Broadband Program last year. While we continue our planning work we also recognize the importance to expeditiously pursue funding opportunities and partnerships.

We hope the information provided below is helpful towards the successful grant application to the Northern Border Regional Commission, and we would be happy to provide additional information if needed.

What is your estimated total cost of a fiber build-out to provide broadband access to all domiciles, businesses and Town facilities along our approximately 100 miles of roadway?

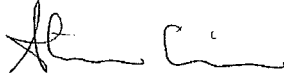
Working with National Rural Telecommunications Cooperative (NRTC), NHEC has developed a capital construction estimate of \$3.349 million to build an all fiber optic network capable of providing service to all domiciles, businesses and municipal facilities in the Town of Sandwich. This estimate includes the cost of make-ready work, project design and engineering, materials, construction of the fiber optic distribution network, electronics and the connection to the internet.

Yes. NHEC is well positioned to partner with municipalities like Sandwich to obtain additional sources of funding. The recently passed ARPA contains funding that states, counties and municipalities can use to support the construction of high-speed internet networks to unserved and underserved citizens. On May 11, the Treasury Department released the Interim Final Rule for ARPA, which provides guidance on how states, counties and municipalities should use the funding. This guidance encourages prioritization of funding to local governments, non-profits and cooperatives. A partnership between NHEC and the Town of Sandwich would be well positioned to pursue additional funding from ARPA.

NHEC is currently working with its partners Mission Broadband, CTC and NRTC to identify and pursue additional funding opportunities. NHEC has also engaged a grant writer to support these efforts.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide information and comments in support of the Town of Sandwich's efforts to expand high-speed internet to the community. Please do not hesitate to contact NHEC with any additional questions or information requests that may be helpful in preparing your grant application.

Sincerely,



Steven Camerino
President / CEO



Julie Dolan <jdolan6233@gmail.com>

Northern Border Regional Commission application

Mclver, Jeffrey <Jeffrey.Mclver@consolidated.com>

Thu, May 13, 2021 at 2:34 PM

To: Julie Dolan <jdolan6233@gmail.com>, "Holmes,Brad" <Brad.Holmes@gartner.com>

Cc: Rob Koester <Rob.Koester@consolidated.com>

Good Afternoon Julie and Brad,

Thank you very much for giving us the opportunity to respond to your letter and potentially partner with the Town of Sandwich. Please see our updates to your questions below. Let me know if there is anything else I can provide or follow up on.

In addition to your general expression of support, we ask specifically for your written response to these questions by close-of-business on May 13, 2021:

- What is your estimated total cost of a fiber build-out to provide broadband access to all domiciles, businesses and Town facilities along our approximately 100 miles of roadway? We estimate it will cost \$3,909,500 to build the fiber infrastructure. The cost is going up as the price of materials and especially labor continue to increase.
- How much of that total project would a successful grant of \$1.1 million make possible? Please specify the number of premises such a grant would provide access to. The funding of \$1.1M would be sufficient to enable the backbone but no end user connections would be possible on those funds alone.
- Would you require funding from federal, state or other sources in addition to your own capital to complete a broadband network providing 100 percent access to the Town of Sandwich? Yes, we would require additional funding to cover 100% of the town.
- If you anticipate the need for outside subsidy, how much would you require in specific dollar amounts, and what percentage of the total project cost would such subsidy represent? A total of \$2.8M.
- Would your organization be willing to partner with Sandwich to secure additional funding from federal, state, county or other sources as necessary to complete the job as expeditiously as possible? Please briefly describe what sources or strategies you would pursue in collaboration with the Town to secure necessary funding. Consolidated has been and will continue to be active in soliciting partnerships in areas that are cost prohibitive to deploy fiber. We would be eager to work with the town to support in order to secure any additional funding. This would include any available state or federal funding sources. We have a successful track record of utilizing municipal bonding in a sustainable and tax neutral way to fund network expansion. Additional sources of funds could also include the potential for federal grant monies and other third party partnerships.

Best Regards,

Jeff

Jeff Mclver II | Manager – Consumer Product Management

D: 603.656.8023 | C: 603.703.3613

jeffrey.mcliver@consolidated.com

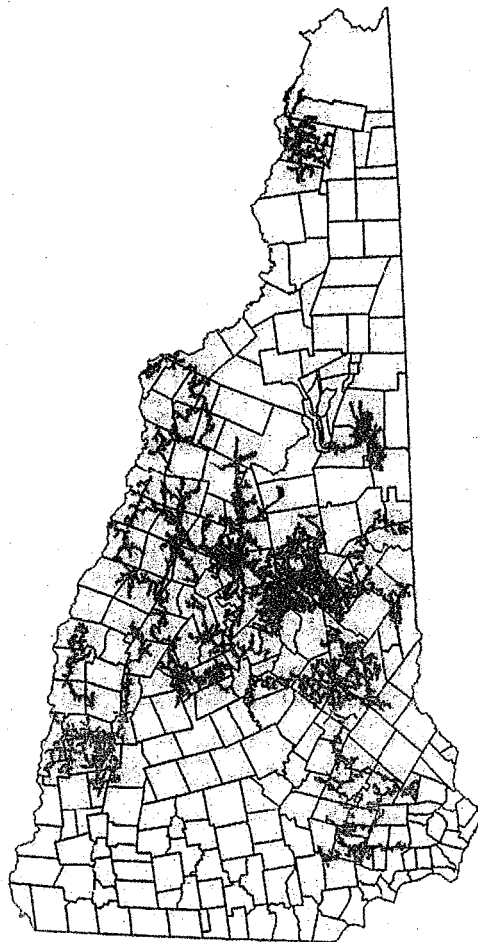
We wanted to provide you with an update on New Hampshire Electric Cooperative's (NHEC) efforts to ensure that all our members in the 118 communities we serve have access to affordable, high-speed internet service.

Last year, the State awarded NHEC \$6.7 million in federal CARES Act funding to extend broadband service to our members. This funding enabled NHEC to build 100 miles of fiber to 1,000 homes and businesses (shown in blue on the map) in 100 days. We completed the project on time and on budget, a major achievement that demonstrated NHEC's commitment to expanding high-speed internet access to unserved and underserved populations and, equally important, our ability to deliver on that commitment.

Now, with the significant additional funding that will be available in New Hampshire under the American Rescue Plan (ARPA), we have an exciting opportunity to work together with municipalities and counties to achieve much more for rural New Hampshire.

NHEC has been actively working to develop a strategic partnership that will help bring high-speed internet to all 70,000 of our member homes and businesses sooner than if this effort were undertaken on a patchwork basis by multiple local and county groups. NHEC's plan is to make service available at approximately 20,000 currently unserved and underserved locations in our service territory, estimated to be in excess of half of New Hampshire's total unserved and underserved population. Building fiber to reach these 20,000 "last mile" addresses would also make it possible to reach the remaining 50,000 of NHEC's member homes and businesses, many of whom currently have substandard service. The full system buildout would deploy 3,400 miles of fiber (shown in red on the map) and could be completed by the ARPA deadline of December 2024.

To accomplish this, NHEC is aggressively pursuing public and private partnership funding, including available ARPA funds, and is willing to commit substantial funds



of its own. While we do not yet have final cost figures, we estimate the full cost of this plan could exceed \$150 million.

Working with you, we are confident we can transform the landscape for New Hampshire families and businesses who are in desperate need of access to reliable, high-speed internet. We have already reached out to the State, to let them know our plans and our ability to implement them, and to express our belief that a unified, more comprehensive approach to grant funding will best serve New Hampshire.

The key to success is building a strong coalition among interested municipalities and counties and non-profit parties like NHEC. By combining the resources of State, county and municipal ARPA funding, along with NHEC's low cost capital, we can ensure that thousands of unserved and underserved locations in 118 rural communities can be connected to reliable and fast internet service.

As you know, communities will be the direct recipients of ARPA Local Fiscal Recovery funds in the amount stated on the Governor's Office for Emergency Relief and Recovery (GOFERR) website. The GOFERR website also provides information on how towns can apply to get those funds, starting on June 18. Many towns have already committed their ARPA funding to support broadband expansion in their areas, and counties are considering using substantial portions of their ARPA funds for broadband. We invite you to join this coalition by allocating some or all of your ARPA grant funds to support broadband expansion, and encouraging your county to do the same. Working together, we can get this done.

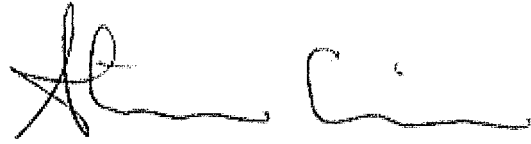
This is an exciting time for NHEC and for the towns and cities in our service area. We look forward to partnering with you as we build out high-speed broadband service to meet the needs of our families and businesses.

Michael Licata, NHEC's Vice President of Member Services and Public Affairs, will be contacting municipalities as our proposal moves forward. In the meantime, please be in touch with Michael should you have any questions or if you would like any additional information. He can be reached at licatam@nhec.com.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey W. Morrill

Jeffrey Morrill
Chairman of the Board

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Steven Camerino". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "S" and a distinct "C".

Steven Camerino
President/CEO



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Plymouth, NH 03264-3154
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603-536-1800

June 28, 2021

Julie Dolan
Chair, Town of Sandwich Broadband Advisory Committee
PO Box 194
Center Sandwich, NH 03227

Dear Ms. Dolan,

New Hampshire Electric Cooperative (NHEC) is proud to support the Town of Sandwich's request of Carroll County for funding to support the construction of a fiber optic network, which will provide high-speed internet access to all residents of the community. NHEC has adopted a goal of ensuring that all our members have access to affordable, reliable, high-speed internet service, and the Town of Sandwich's efforts align with those of the Co-op.

In November of last year, NHEC participated in the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) Rural Digital Opportunity Fund (RDOF) auction, which provided financial support to deliver internet service to residents in Sandwich who do not have access to broadband, as defined by the federal government. NHEC is committed to ensuring that its members and non-members in the Town of Sandwich have access to high-speed internet service.

NHEC is currently working with project partners on the timing and design of our long-term broadband development strategy. A critical component in our decision making is the availability of additional grants and support, which will be used to reduce construction costs, financial risk and keep services affordable to customers. The financial support from Carroll County that the Town of Sandwich is seeking would assist NHEC in extending a fiber optic network to all locations in the community.

NHEC fully supports the Town of Sandwich in its request and looks forward to working with the Town to achieve our shared goals.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael Licata". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being more prominent.

Michael Licata
Vice President, Member Services and Public Affairs