

**TOWN OF MILTON
MUNICIPAL BROADBAND COMMITTEE**

Report to the Board of Selectmen

June 25, 2018

Committee Members

- **Mark Botelho**
- **Joe Chamberlin**
- **Mark Day**
- **Jay Fundling**
- **Steve Paxhia**
- **Jim Sgroi**
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Executive Summary

The Municipal Broadband Committee is charged with examining the feasibility of the Town of Milton developing and operating its own broadband network.

1) We recommend that the town's near term efforts be focused on replacing the town's Institutional Network, with a network owned and controlled by the town of Milton.

- the INET is a key element of the Comcast negotiation
- the committee believes that there is a significant opportunity to substantially improve the INET, both in the short and long terms

2) With regard to a town-wide residential broadband network the committee strongly recommends that any decisions on town-wide, FTTH, municipal broadband network should be deferred until after the immediate needs of the town's INET are met.

Methodology

The committee held 10 public meetings between March 5, 2018 and June 18, 2018.

We invited 11 guest speakers to address these meetings, people who have both built municipal broadband networks or who currently operate one.

In addition the committee chair interviewed another 23 experts as well.

Summary of Findings

- **Two types of broadband network:**
 - Institutional (in Milton, the “INET”)
 - Residential
- **Comcast owns Milton’s INET, and has indicated it won’t support it in the next franchise agreement.**
- **Untimely disconnection or diminished technical support of INET services could cause major disruptions to the town’s data and high speed Internet infrastructure.**

Summary of Findings (cont'd)

- Assuming Comcast discontinues INET support, the town will have to replace all of its current network/Internet services for town offices and the schools.
- The town would have to decide between building its own INET or contracting for these services from a commercial provider resulting in a new recurring expenses that is not currently anticipated in the town's budget.

Recommendation

- The data gathered to date suggests that Milton should focus on developing an institutional network, while allowing for the potential for that network to be usable as the backbone for possible future residential networks.
- Accordingly, we are proposing that the Board of Selectmen issue an RFP for a professional study of a municipal broadband network for the Town to further explore and validate the committee's initial assumptions.

Such a study (colloquially referred to as a “mile high” study) would establish the feasibility and likely cost for building a municipal broadband network.

In light of the urgency presented by Comcast's likely abandonment of INET support in the next franchise agreement, we also urge that the RFP be developed and issued as soon as possible.

- We believe that the “mile high” study we envision should cost no more than \$30,000.
- The study's cost will be a function of how much work we ask the consulting firm to do, so the final number may be less than the committee's estimate.

Summary of Issues for Study

Our committee discussions have identified certain elements that are specific to Milton's situation and should be explicitly called out in the RFP and ensuing study:

1. The network design should be targeted at INET replacement, as opposed to building a residential broadband network.

Summary of Issues for Study (cont'd)

2. the new network design should not duplicate the INET's current topology, nor it's relatively limited capacity

3. The town might be able to take advantage of the town's existing fire alarm system, in that it may be possible that a municipal broadband network could reuse the space currently used on poles for the fire alarm system.

4. We have nearby towns (Braintree and Norwood) that currently operate municipal broadband networks and are keen to be considered as potential partners or operators for a broadband network in Milton.

Summary of Issues for Study (cont'd)

5. The functional and technological capabilities of the envisioned network should support the possibility for other uses on the horizon, both for municipal opportunities (e.g. first responder communications, educational services for the public schools, healthcare services for local elderly communities, leasing to third-party operators), as well as possible expansion to support a town-wide residential broadband network.

6. The study should consider potential public private partnerships with the caveat that the town of Milton retain ownership and control over any resulting broadband network.

Committee's Report

A more comprehensive report to the Board of Selectmen offering more detail and context than this PowerPoint presentation has been submitted to the Board of Selectmen.

Please contact Joe Chamberlin or anyone else on the committee for copies.