

2020 Feb. 10 KVCOG Regional Broadband Meeting

The Litchfield Broadband Committee was all present except for Josh O'Neill. The meeting was held at the Litchfield Fire Station building.

Cary Tyson from KVCOG helped us to organize a regional meeting to include Monmouth and Wales in our discussions and learn what other towns are doing for broadband as well. We were pleased to have two people from Monmouth, Nancy Smith and Kelvin Hasch. We also had three Litchfield residents present (Gary Bell, W. Allan White, Joel Packer), the state representative for Litchfield, Monmouth and Wales - Kent Ackley and a consultant from Gardiner, Brian Lippold for a total of 13 participants.

Discussions were organized and Larry Bell went over our DRAFT for a Strategic Plan that may go 5-7 years. After this presentation, we asked Monmouth what their present plans were for broadband and both acknowledge there is no active group presently working on broadband. They stated the big challenge is that those that have it are satisfied/unsatisfied but are not actively going to town to complain. Those that don't have it have not formally organized. Kent Ackley did mention to Monmouth that they have TIF monies that can be used to improve their broadband issues.

We had a good discussion on education and the need to help residents better understand the future needs (5G) and what might be possible with technology. Many are not aware that newer technology will require much better broadband to work in rural areas. The driverless car was one example but more relevant to our residents are things like telemedicine and educational options on-line.

Brian Lippold, a consultant from neighboring Gardiner, spoke on the needs of each community a bit. There are 488 municipalities in Maine and ~200 are looking for better broadband solutions at this time. He mentioned that towns need to understand their gaps, what the cost will be and must create educational material for the residents because at some point there will be a cost and all need to get on board or understand what is at stake if they do not. He feels there is a great need to get some studies and education out to town residents. Having regional approaches sometimes work to each town's benefit because SCALE catches the eye of the providers. Scale matters.

We also mentioned to all present that there is a new fixed, remote wireless company TK Networks that will be coming to Litchfield, Monmouth and Wales by the end of the month of February. Kent was willing to get this news out to his constituents via his email so once we know more on timeline, we should update him.