

## **Connected Greensboro Task Force**

### **Update for The Greensboro Association**

The “Connected Greensboro” task force has been working on a mission to achieve maximum broadband and mobile/cellular coverage and connectivity at affordable prices for the residents of Greensboro. High-speed internet is defined by the FCC as 25 megabits per second download speed and three megabits per second upload speed. Clearly many of our residents have limited or no access or are unhappy with their options for broadband. We conducted a survey of residents to share needs for broadband services in our community. The results confirmed the lack of adequate broadband service and further amplified priorities. A lack of financial incentives for providers to service areas like Greensboro and the NEK has made it difficult to make progress on securing vital services.

Our priority through the winter and spring was to facilitate efforts for Greensboro to join NEK Community Broadband, a newly formed CUD (Communications Union District). Following a successful vote at town meeting, Greensboro is now a member of the NEK Community Broadband and is positioned to work collectively with other member towns to take advantage of fundraising, feasibility studies, provider negotiations and ultimately implementation of services across the NEK. Carol Fairbank was selected as the representative from Greensboro to join the board of the CUD and Mary Metcalf was selected as alternate. While it will take some time to see these services deployed and servicing Greensboro residents, it is clear that Greensboro and Orleans County are positioned well for implementation given proximity of existing infrastructure, and multiple factors that increase our eligibility for prioritization. Covid-19 has expanded the urgency and actions are already actively underway to deploy broadband with CARES funding to those with acute needs (e.g. populations with high needs for education, telehealth, telework) in particular by extending existing infrastructure where feasible. To learn more about the CUD and the encouraging progress that's been made in a very short time, please visit the [NEK Broadband website](#), where you'll find information, an FAQ, and board meeting minutes to date.

The committee has also explored potential technologies including Fiber, Digital Subscriber Line (DSL), Cable Internet services, Fixed Wireless, Satellite and Cellular as well as discussed commercial plans with providers. These efforts dovetailed with onboarding our CUD

participation to help identify service options for Greensboro.

The committee successfully deployed a local hotspot in Greensboro located at the United Church of Christ using a grant from the Vermont Council on Rural Development (VCRD). The goal of the hotspot is to service the village, the public beach and the town and village greens with wifi internet access, wifi calling and improved safety and emergency response. Spark generously offered to host and enable the hotspot with their high-speed fiber network.

We also initiated activities to further evaluate area mobile/cellular coverage providers, issues and challenges. AT&T's agreement with VTel and other tower improvements has improved cellular access in the area for AT&T subscribers.

The committee is continuing to keep abreast of developments and the members are available to answer questions and address concerns.

Committee members currently include: Carol Fairbank, Pal Bickford, Fred Mann, Dave Stoner, Mary Metcalf, Joan Feffer, Ken Johnston, Stew Arnold, Michael Hoffman, Sam Young and John Stone (Chair).

**Respectfully Submitted**

**John C Stone III**