

Minutes of Belvidere Planning Commission Meeting  
January 12, 2023 In-person and Zoom Hybrid Meeting

Meeting convened at 6:35 PM and Adjourned at 8:20 PM  
BPC members present by Zoom were Mary Hysick, Ken Adams, Deb Baker, and Fran Leavitt. Visitors by Zoom were Dan Noyes, Rich Westman, and Christine Hallquist. Present at the Belvidere Town Clerk's Office: Andy Iwaskiewicz, Kathy Marchant.

There were no adjustments to the agenda.

Motion by Fran to accept the minutes of the December 8, 2022 meeting as written; second by Mary Hysick; motion carried.

Fran welcomed the visitors Noyes, Westman, and Hallquist.

Discussion of Cell and Broadband services ensued beginning with the statement that improved cell phone coverage in town is the most frequent request from residents, and BPC does not know the next best step to take.

Christine Hallquist explained that lack of cell service is the result of the cost of antennas and the gray shadow from mountains. Options were explored: get broadband in place and leverage from there to obtain cell antennas. Cell access is available through Wifi. Bouncing signals with small antennae set on utility poles might be an additional answer for Belvidere.

Mansfield and Lamoille CUD were not in attendance because they are working on RFP (requests for proposals) this evening. MacMountain is a possible firm to have install small antennas. She will contact them as she thinks they should be hired by entities in the state. Christine, when she worked with VEC had the larger capacity poles installed in anticipation of fiber and mini antennas.

Can ARPA funds be used to put up micro-cell "towers"? That is a question for DPS. Traditional cell towers won't work that well here. Ken explained the history of efforts to obtain cell when working with

VTel. They offered a one-sided deal with no restrictions or sensible guidelines, so the SB turned them down.

MacMountain offers service in a circular radius, but obstructions have an effect: mountains, foliage. Placed carefully, perhaps the town would require 4 (or 6) antennae that cost about \$15,000 each. Westman and Noyes did not think that was an unreasonable cost in contrast to the amount of money being spent around the state for Broadband. Concern was expressed for getting signals to sugar makers and loggers. Mobile wireless repeaters are a possibility. Of note is that Belvidere has one of the worst cell services in the state according to recent testing by the state.

Rich explained that the hotspot located on the grade school was part of an effort on his part for 33 students who needed to attend classes on line during COVID. It was stated that the hotspot was a big help for students, teachers, and a few small businesses.

Use of an existing tower on private land was discussed and Christine explained that it was complicated; however, Rule 3700 states that any poles put up on public land can be used. They must be shared, so the prevalent VEC poles should be available for broadband service offered by multiple companies to our residents.

Cell service by mini antenna must be "backhauled" by a large fiber company. Consolidated has proprietary technology for their system and the company is expanding broadband service into Belvidere. Consolidated has not returned calls from our representatives.

Christine, Dan, and Rich committed to working together to bring Broadband and Cell to our town. Christine said she would call MacMountain soon and she is encouraging the legislature to fund work by MacMountain. The Belvidere Planning Commission thanked them for their time, their information and their commitment to helping Belvidere residents obtain better cell service and a fiber network.

It was suggested that BPC send letters to Lamoille Fibernet and Mansfield stating that we want fiber ASAP and cell should be part of the solution of internet and cell for our town. The commission will also

send follow up letters to Dan Noyes, Rich Westman, and Christine Hallquist.

An analogy was made with the time needed for rebuilding Notre Dame Cathedral versus the time needed to obtain fiber and cell in Belvidere.

Other business: Ken reported on the efforts to reclassify a few highways in Belvidere with Brian Monahan and his law firm handling the legalities. The project is nearing a time for a public meeting.

No mail. No public comment.

Andy made a motion to adjourn with a second by Mary. The meeting adjourned at 8:20 PM.