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## Grafton County Executive Committee Approves Nearly \$4 Million For Broadband

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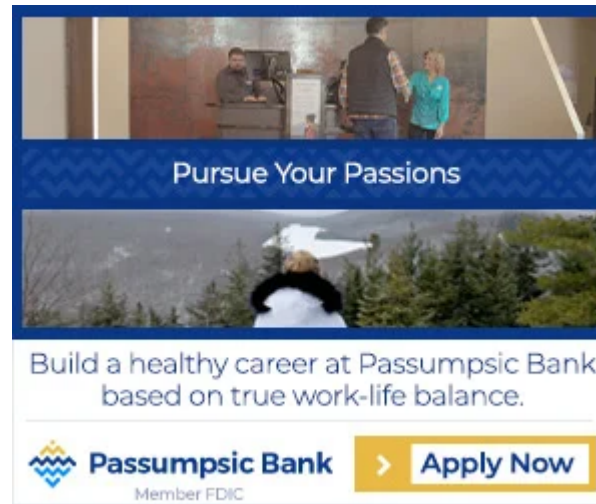


The Grafton County Broadband Committee is advancing its efforts over the recent objections of several large corporate Internet providers, who say they already provide sufficient service. County officials and committee members disagree and are sending surveys and data to back up their position of insufficient broadband in many areas of the county to the National Telecommunications and Information Administration, which could award Grafton County a \$26.2 million grant for its universal broadband project. (Stock photo)

On Monday, a few weeks after learning that Grafton County would not be awarded a \$26.2 million federal grant it sought to help fund its county-wide broadband build-out, the county executive committee approved a big request as the project continues to move forward and seeks other sources of funding.

The Grafton County Executive Committee approved a request by the Grafton County Broadband Committee for \$3,716,799.80 to complete the final engineering of the remaining 240 miles of middle-mile network and the final engineering of last-mile networks for every town in the county.

The money comes from the county's share of federal stimulus funding through the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021.



"It was a unanimous vote, which I think is a really strong message," said Nik Coates, town administrator for Bristol and chairman of the Grafton County Broadband Committee.

Previously, the broadband committee had gone to the county commission with an alternative proposal and request for \$4 million to start building right away what is currently designed.

“They felt it would be best to have all the engineering for the entirety of the county completed, both middle mile and last mile, before we went into construction,” said Coates. “They’ve always wanted to benefit the entire county. Their greatest concern was if we start building this and can’t complete it for some reason, then some of these communities might be left out.”

The first 110 miles of the middle-mile final engineering and the high-level designs for the last mile for each town along that segment are expected to be complete in the next seven to 10 days and construction work on those two items to begin the first week of April, said Coates.

Next week, a draft schedule is expected to be released with each community to work on construction and funding plans with those communities, he said.

Grafton County’s fiber-based broadband build-out, to date funded in large part through federal stimulus funding, aims to provide high-speed broadband to residents, businesses, first responders, hospitals, schools and towns to boost the economy and local businesses, improve public safety and education, and improve the region’s overall quality of life.

The project entails building a broadband backbone that communities can connect to with the Internet provider of their choice.



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