

SALISBURY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

SPECIAL MEETING

MARCH 23, 2023 – 5:30PM (VIA ZOOM)

Present: Janet Graaff, Kitty Kiefer, Ward Belcher, Robert Schaufelberger and Tom Shachtman. Absent: Bruce McEver.

There was brief discussion about the current status of the Town Hall fiber internet system; the new Frontier fiber network in Falls Village; and the possibility of Frontier fiber in Salisbury & Lakeville. Bob Riva, PZC, was attending the meeting and suggested that “Starlink” internet is another viable option; he has done a report for the PZC.

1. Presentation and Q&A with Allison M. Ellis, SVP of Regulatory & Governmental Affairs, Frontier Communications. (The Zoom recording of the meeting, including Ms. Ellis’s presentation, will be available at: <https://www.salisburyct.us/salisbury-economic-development-committee/>) Ms. Ellis gave a brief history and the current status of the company. She spoke about the opportunity to invest in fiber, beyond Frontier’s contribution. J. Graaff asked for information about the financial parameters of the Frontier investment; Ms. Ellis responded that Frontier will look at what contribution the town needs to make. She added that deployment is expensive, but there are many other expenses involved. There were questions about the service costs; Ms. Ellis answered that there would be a one-time capital contribution for the project. She expressed that current offers for monthly service are extremely competitive. R. Schaufelberger asked about the lines visually affecting the town; Ms. Ellis described the way fiber cable would be attached, as well as the hub and terminal boxes. As far as maintenance, she indicated that they have a lot of crews in CT and it is faster to fix fiber. T. Shachtman asked about the timeline for the town; Ms. Ellis responded that they are doing feeder/distribution fiber deployment now; they will be opening for customers in the June timeframe, as they roll out. T. Shachtman asked about getting involvement from the town; Ms. Ellis replied, the sooner the better. She pointed out that many customers will be able to opt in for Frontier service, where the fiber is in place. There was discussion about different ways of financing including: direct contributions, special assessments, bonds, using funds such as ARPA and applying for grants for unserved or underserved locations. Ms. Ellis explained the grant application process as lengthy and slow; waiting for grant funding may not be the best option. K. Kiefer asked about individual homes ordering service; Ms. Ellis answered that as customers order service, there could be a \$50 expert installation charge. She further suggested promoting the product and investment, as Frontier will not be able to entirely fund every high-cost location. It was pointed out that there have been pole maintenance concerns and service issues in the past. J. Graaff ended the meeting, with thanks to Ms. Ellis. Afterwards, there were additional questions from Ruth Epstein, Republican American, about next steps for the SEDC. The SEDC may offer their opinion to the BOS, as an advisory group.