



## WiFi Considerations

To Neighbors Together Steering Committee

The question of including some funding for WiFi came up during our AOT budgeting discussions. Recent meetings with Green Mountain Access and Ruckus representatives gave us more information and cost for developing unsecured WiFi for downtown, Marbleworks, Memorial sports center, schools, and recreational facility. This also included neighboring residential/commercial areas. I have tried to summarize what we know and give several starting suggestions of where to go next.

### **October meeting with GMA and Ruckus:**

1. The area included 121 access points (in comparison, downtown Bristol has 6 access points). Each access point can accommodate around 100 users
2. The cost of the equipment for this proposal would be approximately \$100,000
3. The \$100,000 does not include the labor to install, obtaining permission to mount the equipment on private buildings, or (negligible) monthly provider fees that can be offset by advertising, etc.
4. There are possible municipal applications infrastructure and public safety
5. The plan could be broken down into smaller increments and phased in
6. Middlebury College could be a partner by negotiating with their provider (First Light)
7. Other towns that have public WiFi (similar size) include Waitsfield (home of GMA and put in for free as public service), Bristol (put in for free by GMA), and Greenfield, MA.

**Conversation with John Lunt, Greenfield, MA, "G Set Internet. John is speaking Nov 30 at the Southern Vermont Broadband Summit in Brattleboro and recently presented at the Southern New England Planners Association in Concord, MA. He is a big proponent of G Set and feels it has proven to be very successful for economic development. He offered to be available for help.**

1. Disclosure: John Lunt a Middlebury College grad in the 80s so familiar with town
2. Worked with Ruckus and found them to be reasonable and knowledgeable
3. They used to have Comcast and voted in 2011-12 (with full town government support and town support) to develop their own internet company with the goal to cover entire area of Greenfield.
4. Secure system
5. Phased in, Now 800 households and 900 APs. Covers 80% core town and 20% outlying areas.
6. 200 game developers came into Greenfield as a result of co-working spaces opening up

7. Much less expensive than Comcast so government, businesses and residents saving money
8. Who do we want to serve?
9. Make sure political and organizational structures on board
10. What resources do we have to invest?
11. How to run it?
  - a. Self fun
  - b. Another company run
12. What local organizational structure?
13. Financial consideration
  - a. Phasing?
  - b. Can be expensive
  - c. Generate revenue before can build out?
  - d. How to pay for totality?
  - e. Consolidate debt?
  - f. What are the options?
14. What customers?
  - a. Business?
  - b. Those without good internet now?
  - c. Those who find it too expensive now?
15. Technical questions cannot be the driving force—must come second
16. There will be legal “fight” with Comcast; who owns poles, etc
17. Hire a consultant to help determine what questions to ask
  - a. Who to serve?
  - b. How to do it?
  - c. How to build local
  - d. Base of support
  - e. Who to pay?
  - f. Who willing to pay?
18. There are community block grants and mini entitlement funds available

**Questions for Neighbors, Together to consider:**

1. Give this information to the Select Board and Administration to either decide to do something with it, to for go it, or give it to the Economic Development Committee to further pursue.
2. N,T steps away from WiFi as one of its programs
3. Do we include up to \$50,000 in the 2019 budget request to go toward WiFi either by phasing in unsecured WiFi downtown **or** to go toward a consultant.
4. If we choose to include WiFi money in this budget then it may mean deleting some other program