

## **Town of Chatham Broadband Committee**

### **Broadband survey report November 18, 2020**

Driven by numerous complaints by residents about the lack of access to broadband (defined by the FCC as 25 megabits/second download and 3 mbps upload), the town formed a broadband committee to focus on the problem and find solutions.

The committee consists of Vance Pitkin (town board member and committee chairman), Gabriella Sperry (Chair of the town Planning Committee), Cody Anderson (recently resigned due to personal commitments), Gail Cirone and David Levow (Chair of the town Finance and Planning Committee).

The committee goals were to gather and analyze data regarding broadband access, develop coverage maps to provide to town residents and to use that data in meeting with service providers and local legislators to increase broadband coverage in the town.

A survey was posted on the town website. Committee members have met with and been in contact with local legislators. Committee members have also been in contact with representatives of the broadband providers (Consolidated Communications and Spectrum (Charter) to attempt to motivate them to increase their coverage.

The coverage data consisted of the following:

- A petition from residents of the hamlet of Rayville/County Route 13 with 46 signatures
- A petition from residents of Thomas Road (and environs) with 29 signatures
- A survey on the town's website asking respondents about their broadband coverage (basically - do you have it, who is the provider, what speed do you have)
- A postcard mailed to approximately 1600 town residents directing them to the website survey
- An e-mail sent by State Senator Daphne Jordan to approximately 200 town residents (using a mailing list her office maintains for her senatorial purposes) directing recipients to the website survey

Approximately 250 responses were received from the website survey. Duplicates and responses from outside the town as well as from the village were eliminated.

Based on the petitions and survey responses and thanks to a Herculean effort by Evan Young (member of the town Planning Board) who volunteered to assist the committee, the data were transferred to a coverage map showing what areas had or lacked coverage. Circles were drawn around areas that, in our judgment, has sufficient data to form a cluster (radius of .5 miles) as well as roadways that appeared to have coverage along at least part of their length.

The map can be used in a number of ways but bear in mind that we are limited by the data that we have.

First, it identifies, insofar as the data permits, areas lacking broadband coverage. This information can be taken to the broadband providers who can either confirm the absence of coverage or point out nearby coverage points. While the providers have been reluctant to share their coverage maps with residents and town officials, they may be willing to fill in some holes in our coverage data which could then be made available to town residents.

Secondly, residents can locate their property on the map to see if any neighbors have broadband and who the provider is.

Furthermore, there appear to be areas with coverage separated from other areas with coverage, both of which lie along the same road, suggesting that there might be coverage in the areas between the two, assuming that the cable or fiber would be strung along that road. This information would be useful to residents along the road.

The data in the map potentially allows group of residents to band together and approach the providers as the two groups mentioned above have done. Further information about specific Spectrum location availability can be obtained at [bldlkup.com](http://bldlkup.com). There does not appear to be a similar tool for Consolidated Communications.

Referring to the attached map and the labelled clusters:

For Areas 1-8, each area of analysis includes all parcels within a 1/2 mile radius.

Area 1 (County route 13/Ford Road):

No high speed internet service: 19  
Consolidated <25 mbps: 4

Area 2 (Boice Road/Thomas Road):

No high speed internet service: 17

Area 3 (Drowne Road, Pitts Road, et. al.)

No high speed internet service: 4  
Consolidated <25 mbps: 6

Area 4 (Ford Road, Blueberry Hill Road, Seven Bridges Road)

No high speed internet service: 4  
Consolidated <25 mbps: 2

Area 5 (Dorland Road, County Route 13, et. al.)

No high speed internet service: 4  
Consolidated <25 mbps: 2

Area 6 (Riders Mills Road)

No high speed internet service: 5  
Consolidated <25 mbps: 1

Area 7 (Elliot Road, New Concord Road)

No high speed internet service: 3

Consolidated <25 mbps: 3

Area 8 (Bashford Road, Richmond Road, Reed Road)

No high speed internet service: 2

Consolidated <25 mbps: 3

For Areas 9 - 14, each area of analysis was created based on the committee's judgement. There may be overlap with one or more of the areas above.

Area 9 – Route 203 North Chatham

No high speed internet service: 1

Consolidated <25 mbps: 1

Consolidated =>25 mbps: 2

Spectrum => 25 mbps: 5

Area 10 – Kinderhook Lake/E. Shore Drive

No high speed internet service: 1

Consolidated <25 mbps: 3

Spectrum => 25 mbps: 5

Area 11 – East Chatham/Route 295/Frisbee Street

No high speed internet service: 1

Consolidated =>25 mbps: 1

Spectrum => 25 mbps: 4

Area 12 – Upper Cady Road/Rock City intersection

No high speed internet service: 1

Consolidated <25 mbps: 6

Spectrum => 25 mbps: 1

Area 13 – County Route 13/Ford Road

No high speed internet service: 21

Consolidated <25 mbps: 4

Area 14 – Clark Road

Consolidated <25 mbps: 2

Consolidated =>25 mbps: 4

## **How to use the Broadband Map**

Find your location on the map. The map is taken from the town tax rolls and every plot is shown.

See if you are in a cluster or on a road with service nearby. Check with your neighbors. They may have service but didn't respond to the survey. If they didn't fill out the survey, ask them to do so to help fill out the coverage map.

If there appears to be no service nearby, consider organizing and approaching the broadband providers as a group. One neighborhood has done so and received a proposal from Consolidated.

### **Next steps:**

Publish this report and the map on the town website

Inform the members of the broadband e-mail list of the report and map

Publicize results of petitions

Provide legislative contact information

Provide broadband contact information

Investigate the public/private partnership identified by the Columbia County Democratic Committee

Continue to work through the Board of Supervisors