



Committees Hold Down Costs, Find Funds for Major Projects

Residents show no resistance to investing in “broadband for all”

by CRAIG STERRETT
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Baileys Harbor residents hope to go from having little or no internet service to the best possible service within a year or less.

Town board members this winter got a head start on seeking grants and engineers to deliver fiber for broadband internet to all premises in the town, and Baileys Harbor residents applauded the effort during the April 19 annual town meeting.

But guided by an all-volunteer committee led by town resident Kurt Kiefer – who retired as the state education department’s assistant state superintendent for libraries and technology – the town board got the ball rolling several weeks in advance of the town meeting. Town board members, Kiefer and broadband committee members decided to position the town for several major grants prior to the annual meeting by finding a project partner and completing a survey of residents.

Town Chair Don Sitte and the board members said this winter that if they saw opposition at the annual meeting from residents and property owners to the \$5 million-plus project, they could still

back out of it. But the survey indicated no resistance, and no one in the audience of 130 people at the town meeting voiced dissent.

Unlike in 2021, when residents voted to acquire the waterfront Nelson’s Hardware properties, no vote took place during this year’s meeting. Town Clerk Haley Adams said that because the town is not to the point of issuing bonds – and it has defined this as an infrastructure project – no vote was required.

Kiefer told the audience that all town premises should, within the next year or two, receive quality, high-speed internet for half the price of the internet service that’s currently available only in some portions of the town. Baileys Harbor has partnered with NSight Communications, which already has a backbone of fiber that zigzags to the tip of the peninsula and serves all premises on Washington Island.

Kiefer said Baileys Harbor is in a perfect position to win a \$1.89 million Wisconsin Public Service Commission (PSC) grant this year because its opinion survey is complete; it has a construction partner; and NSight will route fiber to every underserved and “unserved” location.

“The fact that we’re serving everybody is a big deal when they evaluate those things,” Kiefer said about their chances of receiving the grant.

If the town did not receive the grant and taxpayers had to foot the entire \$5.2 million project expense, the annual tax increase per \$100,000 of assessed value

What Will It Cost?

Broadband to all premises: \$5,250,000

- Labor: \$4,544,214
 - Materials: \$300,000
 - Electronics: \$30,000
 - Drops: \$254,000
 - Premise equipment: \$121,860
- Source: Door County Economic Development Corporation Engineering Study, November 2021, cross-validated with the Washington Island Electric Co-op’s project

would be \$69, said committee member Evan Webster. He said internet-service rates should drop from \$100 or more per month to \$50 per month per household, or \$65 per business, which will allow town residents to spend \$600 less per year and receive better service.

Webster said if the town wins the PSC grant, it would need to finance \$2.9 million of the project, and tax bill increases would be \$42 per \$100,000 of valuation.

NSight’s Bob Webb said that NSight may need to bump up its price to the \$60-\$65 range within the next two years. At that price, Kiefer said taxpayers’ cost may be less than \$42 per \$100,000.

Kiefer said the \$5.2 million estimate took into account the cost – as of mid-winter 2021 – of delivering broadband fiber to every single premises in every corner of the township. In most locations,

contractors working for NSight will use existing utility poles, and where they can’t, they’ll bury lines or install poles. As a parent of young children, resident Kari Baumann said her family learned firsthand about the necessity of good internet service. During the pandemic, inadequate connectivity at their home did not always allow her child to participate in remote learning at Gibraltar.

“We pay for two services at our house and increased our cell phone data, and that still wasn’t enough,” Baumann said. “Having [fiber] come through our town, it’s not just being able to enjoy the luxuries of watching TV. It’s a life decision for our children.”

Committee Holds Down Nelson’s Property Costs

During the town meeting, David Eliot, former town board chair and the current chair of the Nelson Property Ad Hoc Committee, said his group has raised more than \$1.1 million – in pledges and about \$500,000 already in an account – to defray the initial costs of the Nelson’s site purchase and planning for the waterfront property and adjacent marina.

The funds raised for the Baileys Harbor Open Space Preservation Fund will cover this year’s \$600,000 payment on the note for the Nelson’s site purchase, plus the cost of the town hiring Edgewater Resources to help plan the future of the site and do grant writing to further cover costs, Eliot said. Edgewater Resources and the committee will schedule meetings with the public later this spring.

Republicans Press Governor to Repair the Tower This Year continued from page 1

Support has come during the past two years in the form of letters from all major stakeholders, including the City of Sturgeon Bay and County of Door; the assessment of the tower paid for and conducted by the Sturgeon Bay Historical Society Foundation (SBHSF); and that group’s successful campaign to get the tower listed on both the state and national Registers of Historic Places. The DNR then held a public-comment period earlier this year about what to do with the tower. Of the 361 people who commented, 353 supported the tower.

The job GRAEF has been awarded calls for 10% concept plans. When asked what that means, the DNR’s Missy Vanlanduyt, who was also at the press conference, said that all DOA projects begin with 10% concept plans. Once received, those plans will be vetted and made available for public feedback.

“The next phase goes to 35%, at which point, if it’s in the governor’s budget, it will then go to the State Building Commission, and from there it will go to 100%,” she said. “That’s standard DOA process.”

The concept plans aren’t due until December. SBHSF representatives, with whom Evers spoke after the press conference, implored the governor to do something to stabilize the tower this year while GRAEF is working on the concept drawings.

“There are some maintenance things that can be done that would get us through this year,” SBHSF member Christie Weber said. “Until that happens, every storm, it’s [the tower] getting worse.”

“We can talk to GRAEF about that,” Evers responded. When several others also expressed concern that the tower would fall down before something was done, Evers said, “We need to get some experts ready to take a look at this to see what kind of preservation can be done to make sure it doesn’t fall down, and we’ll just take it from there.”

Both restoration of the existing structure and a rebuild of an entirely new tower are both on the table. Although Evers said he didn’t have a preference – “I personally am not getting behind a specific proposal; I just want to get this done,” he said – the DNR emphasized that the accessibility component would be critical.

“Regardless of whether we’re looking at more of a restoration or more of a new rebuild, there will be an accessible-access component,” said Sean Kennedy, DNR liaison, after the press conference.

The governor’s visit, announced the evening before his arrival, came on the heels of a press release issued Friday by Rebecca Kleefisch, a former lieutenant governor and a Republican gubernatorial candidate

vying with a field of others to challenge Evers in November. She said if the tower were not fixed and she were elected governor, she would “immediately begin the process of approving the repairs.”

She also called on the Evers administration to repair the tower and “quit wasting time and money on another study. The choice here is simple,” she continued in her statement. “Spend as little as \$250,000 to quickly repair the tower and open it back up for public use, or spend millions to replace it. I am calling on the governor to use the funding he already has available to quickly repair the tower and reopen it for the summer.”

Rep. Joel Kitchens (R-Sturgeon Bay), who has been an advocate for the tower’s repair and who attended the press conference, said he didn’t hear what he wanted to hear from the governor.

“I would have loved for him to have said, ‘We’re going to fix the tower the way it is; we’ll stabilize it; then we’ll worry about what to do to make it accessible after that,’” Kitchens said.

He also predicted that the governor’s budget would contain an expensive proposal that would not survive the legislature.

“If they put \$5 million in the budget, no way it’s going to stay in the budget,” Kitchens said. “We already have one up the road [Eagle Tower] that cost \$4 million. It’s just not going to happen. And that’s not what people are asking for. People just want it fixed. And they can do that for \$250,000, so just fix it. If you can make it accessible, great, but it’s a historic structure. They have a legal obligation to fix it.”

State Sen. André Jacque (R-De Pere) did not attend the press conference but issued a statement saying the governor continued to deploy a strategy of “stall and blame to get past the election, and avoid doing a historical project that the Evers administration has demonstrated time and time again that it has no interest in doing.”



Department of Natural Resources Secretary Preston Cole speaks while Gov. Tony Evers (right) and DNR employees look on. Photo by Debra Fitzgerald.

perspectives

EDITOR’S NOTE

Peninsula Pulse Hires Two New Reporters

by DEBRA FITZGERALD
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There are a lot of exciting things happening here at the *Pulse*.

One of those things I can’t even talk about – though we’ve known about it for five months – because it’s embargoed until June, when the Wisconsin Newspaper Association will hold this year’s Better Newspaper Awards banquet. Stay tuned for that.

The other exciting news can be summed up in the headline of this column. You may not have seen a headline like that for a long time, if ever. You may have read plenty about remote hedge funds buying up newspapers and milking them dry for profits. You probably knew a few newspapers that no longer exist, or exist in name only, and have felt

the black holes that their absence has gut-punched into their communities.

I’ve been working in newspapers for more than 20 years now, and I’ve seen them quickly disemboweled. I’ve also seen them dismantled slowly, yet so steadily that neither the employees nor the communities they served knew they were in hot water until they boiled to death. Neither of those things is happening here.

The *Peninsula Pulse* is growing, and the local owners – David Eliot and Myles Dannhausen Jr. – are investing back into the communities the *Pulse* serves by hiring two new reporters.

That almost never happens these days. Reporters are the employees who create a newspaper’s value for readers and advertisers – I will always strongly maintain – and yet reporters are generally the first to be cut. Their remaining colleagues are then deserted, scrambling to cover beats too large for

one human. If the owners don’t cut you out, they burn you out.

That’s not happening here. We’ve hired a veteran reporter, Kevin Boneske, a recent victim of cuts at the *Press Times* in Green Bay. Kevin has worked at papers around the state, including in the Door/Kewaunee county region during his years with Bay Publications. He’ll allow us to extend our coverage from the City of Sturgeon Bay south. He also has experience as a sports reporter and editor, so he’ll be picking up some coverage for area high schools.

We’ve also hired Sam Watson. She’ll graduate at the end of May from the University of Wisconsin-Madison’s School of Journalism and Mass Communication. She served in an editorial leadership position at her student newspaper and gained some solid clips. When it came time for her to cast her net for jobs, she already knew she didn’t want to work in a large city.

“I want a job in a community I can truly connect to, and I want to serve that community with balanced, accessible reporting,” Watson wrote in her cover letter applying for the position.

Kevin grew up in Sturgeon Bay and already owned a home here, so his entry was seamless. Sam, on the other hand, is facing what other new hires are no doubt learning all over Door County: There’s little to no housing to be had. (So this is also a shameless plug for anyone who has a lead on a two-bedroom apartment beginning in June.)

It’s beyond exciting to hire two new reporters who can help us serve our communities better than ever before. But it’s also gratifying to hire someone who has dedicated his career to journalism, and another who’s just starting out who will help to shape journalism’s future.

We’re thrilled to have them both. Say hello if you see them around.

PERSPECTIVE

Payback

by MYLES DANNHAUSEN JR.
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As I write this, the smell of toddler vomit still fills my nostrils.

That’s not the most enticing lede I’ve ever written, and surely many of you have stopped reading already. Don’t worry – I’m not offended.

I write this from the Appleton Airport, where my son, Connor, is momentarily content climbing on chairs in search of airplanes. He’s not quite two, and we’re in the midst of our first travel adventure without Mom.

But back to the vomit.

On our drive to the airport, my cell phone went on the fritz. Not a great start for a dad who relies on his wife for all things travel (and most of the other things). I had left early, giving myself plenty of time to correct any mistakes and still make my flight, so I had time to stop at Cellcom for a – hopefully – quick fix.

Once inside, Connor took a look around and decided to redecorate, spewing berries and yogurt into the air. My parental instincts kicked in and I lunged, hands cupped,

scooping the lion’s share of his breakfast before it hit the floor.

My hands now full, Connor now staring quizzically at me, I struggled to determine what my next move was. Do I have to explain the obvious to the young man behind the counter? Apologize? Ask for help? No, I bolt for the bathroom and leave my son at the counter, of course.

“I’ll be right back.” Fortunately, Connor didn’t move. He pointed to the floor as I returned. I washed his coat, his shoes, his face. Then he joined me on the floor, wiping what we could from the rug.

In his face, though, standing there, I saw something familiar. I had been here before, but in Connor’s shoes. In first grade at Gibraltar Elementary School, I wasn’t feeling very well during the hour before lunch. I approached the desk of my teacher, Mrs. Koska, and filled her in on my condition.

“Do you think you can try to go to lunch and see if you feel better?” she asked. I nodded. Lunch sounded good.

Not much later, we were in line for the lunch room, Mrs. Koska a few steps in front of me to mark the

front of our class in line. I wasn’t feeling any better, and then I felt it coming.

“Mrs. Koska...” I probably mumbled, but I don’t recall for sure. It was all a blur. She turned, and without hesitation, raced to me in line, and before I could move, she was catching my vomit in her hand cupped beneath my chin, then guiding me to the nearby bathroom and washing me up to walk me to the sick room.

It happened in a blink. Mrs. Koska was no rookie. There would be no embarrassing puddle of spew on the floor, no desperate attempt to clean it up. The next day I didn’t have a new nickname. I don’t think anyone even noticed. Mrs. Koska was *that* good.

Lucille Kotska died March 28. (I had to look up her obituary to find her first name – you never know your elementary teachers’ first names.) She was 92 years old.

As I crawled on my hands and knees on the floor of the Cellcom store, I could almost hear her laughing. She had finally paid me back.

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letters to the editor

Swingin’ Door Big Band a Great Night of Entertainment

Please allow me to offer a sincere thank-you to the Swingin’ Door Big Band for a fantastic show, and to the youth of the Prince of Peace Lutheran Church in Sturgeon Bay for their outstanding hospitality this past Friday.

The *Swing into Spring* event was a fundraiser for the church youth group and featured dinner prepared by Smokin’

Tom’s Team BBQ, music and dancing. The concert was a great start to the Swingin’ Door Big Band’s 2022 season and featured some of Door County’s best musicians playing well-known hits from artists such as Glenn Miller, Cole Porter and Duke Ellington.

The concert was reminiscent of the big-band era of the 1930s and 1940s, and featured vocals by Company B in the timeless style of the Andrews Sisters. To keep in the spirit of old-time shows, there were two “on-air” commercials for humorous products that one might hear while listening to the radio.

Our local musicians did a tremendous job performing all-time favorites, including “In the Mood,” “American Patrol,” “String of Pearls,” “Moonlight Serenade” and so many others. The band left everyone wanting to hear more, and the only disappointment was when the concert was over. The Swingin’ Door Big Band truly is a group that should not be missed this year!

Again, thank you for a great night of entertainment and absolute fun. And to the youth who served the meal, thank you for your hospitality!

Tim Austin
Luxemburg, Wisconsin

Keep School Board Elections Nonpartisan

With the recent school board elections behind us, congratulations are in order to all candidates for their willingness to serve children. It is noble service.

Now would be a good time to commit ourselves to watch carefully the results of political parties pumping money into nonpartisan elections. When nonpartisan elections were created, there were solid reasons

for them, which served us well for many years.

So, we should analyze carefully whether making the oversight of our children’s education a partisan atmosphere – with elected officials governing to please their base – is good for children. After all, the education of our youngsters is essential for all of society.

Karl Hertz
Thiensville, Wisconsin

A Way to Address the Cause of Climate Change

The Associated Press recently reported that climate change is damaging military bases in the Arctic. The story highlights the billions of dollars in damage caused by natural disasters to Air Force bases, operations and other U.S. military installations during recent years. It also noted that the “U.S. military long has