

sharonconnect.org



# SHARON CONNECT

TASK FORCE

## SHOULD SHARON PARTNER WITH COMCAST TO COMPLETE ITS HIGH-SPEED INTERNET NETWORK?



COMMUNITY MEETING • AUGUST 15, 2022 •  
6PM • TOWN HALL AND ON ZOOM

# What is the Sharon Connect Task Force?

A group of volunteers formed the task force in November 2019 to advise the Sharon Board of Selectmen on options to address the lack of universal access to high-speed internet. We sent a survey to residents in 2020 and more than 70% of the 551 households that responded said they would support the town building a network to serve all homes and businesses. We set out to do research and understand the issues involved.

## Sharon Connect Task Force Members

Jill Drew and Meghan Flanagan  
co-chairs

John Brett	Patrick Gallaway	Roger Lourie	
Linda Neiberg	Ben Newhouse	Alexandra Peters	
Barbara Prindle	Brent Prindle	Beth Rybczyk	Eric Simon





The Need.

## Digital Divide: 234 Homes in Sharon Have No Access to Cable Internet

- Before 2007, a cable provider was required by state law to build out 2 miles of road each year in its franchise area at no cost. The state legislature changed the law in 2007 and removed that requirement.
- Since 2007, no new network infrastructure has been built in Sharon unless a homeowner pays for it. We are so spread out that the small number of new subscribers a provider could get for installing wires along a road doesn't make business sense for a private company. And the tens of thousands that it costs to build out these roads is out of reach for most homeowners.
- Comcast is now offering to complete its network and wire homes with high-speed cable internet along the 27 miles of road in town currently without access to its service.

# Comcast Offers to Complete Its Network in Sharon for \$1.6 million



## The Proposal.

- The town would pay in two installments: \$800,000 at the start and \$800,000 upon completion of the project. There may already be sufficient cash in the "undesignated" fund in the town budget to pay the whole amount.
- Comcast commits to finishing the project within six months of getting all needed permits.
- Comcast agrees to wire all households that want service along these roads. Service plans and equipment are the responsibility of those who wish to subscribe.
- Comcast will offer internet, TV, and phone service at different speed tiers and varying price ranges.



## The Alternatives.

### **Frontier**

Its Digital Subscriber Line Service (DSL) can be too slow to support streaming, video calls, or data uploads. The further a home is from Frontier's nearest hub, the slower speeds get without a booster.

### **Satellite**

Hughes Net satellite is not reliable and is used primarily as a last resort. Starlink has begun service to some but it has problems with video calls.

### **Cell Phones/Wifi Hotspots**

Signals are too weak in many homes to support data transmission. Speeds degrade when many users sign on. Data caps can be costly.

### **Town-Owned Fiber-Optic Network**

Sertex Broadband Services produced a feasibility analysis that concluded the town could build and operate its own network for a capital cost of \$12.5 million. It would need 30% of town households to subscribe to break even on an operating basis. It would take an estimated 24-30 months to complete construction.

# Roads Included in Proposal

(preliminary - if your road is missing, let us know)

- Amenia Union Road
- Barberry Hill Road
- Benton Hill Road
- Birch Lane
- Boland Drive
- Butter Road
- Calkinstown Road
- Caroline Drive
- Clark Hill Road
- Cornwall Bridge Road (Rte. 4)
- Crossfield Drive
- Dawn Hill Road
- Drum Road
- Eggleston Road
- Fairchild Road
- Gavell Cabin Road
- Gay Street
- Guinea Road
- Herb Road
- Hooperfields Drive
- Jewett Hill Road
- Joray Road
- Keeler Road
- Kings Hill Road
- Kirk Road
- Lambert Road
- Loper Road
- Lower Deer Run
- Millerton Road
- Modley Road
- Morey Road
- Mudge Pond Road
- North Mountain Road
- Northrup Road
- Old Route 7
- Old Sharon No 2 Road
- River Road
- Sharon Station Road
- Silver Hill Road
- South Ellsworth Road
- Swaller Hill Road
- Tichnor Road
- West Cornwall Road
- West Meadow Road
- West Woods Road #1
- West Woods Road #2
- White Hollow Road



The Details.

# An Investment in Sharon

- This proposal is the most cost-effective and quickest way to connect all of our households and businesses.
- The town has a responsibility to put all residents on an equal footing when it comes to access to essential services. The internet today is an essential service, just like electricity.
- The proposed construction costs are in line with other options the town has considered.
- The Comcast proposal has limited risk for the town because Comcast will handle the project construction management, the construction timeline, as well as the network operation and maintenance. The town will not add to its debt burden nor need to hire additional personnel to oversee the project.



The Investment.

## Next Steps

- The Board of Selectmen will meet to decide whether to recommend approval and, if so, to propose how it should be funded. This is a public meeting.
- The Board of Finance will meet to consider the Board of Selectmen recommendations and to vote on whether to send the proposal to a Town vote. This is a public meeting.
- A Town Meeting will be scheduled two weeks after the Board of Finance meeting for a vote.
- If approved, Comcast will immediately begin applying for permits to start construction. It will also hold customer education events in town for people to learn more about its services.



Next steps.





**THANK YOU**

—  
**Go to**

**[sharonconnect.org](https://sharonconnect.org)**

**for more details or email us at**

**[sharonctconnect@gmail.com](mailto:sharonctconnect@gmail.com)**