**9/23/2021 Fiber Project Update**

Good News!

Things have been slow moving until last week when information began flowing on a totally reconfigured backbone plan for our project.  Recall that originally Brainstorm planned to hang the fiber backbone on the power poles assuming that this would be the most cost-efficient method until the make-ready costs from LPEA far exceeded those from the prior plan of three years ago.  This caused Brainstorm to reconsider burying the fiber backbone.  (The plan has always been to bury fiber to each home.)  Recently, that plan began to take shape and the economics now support an all-underground plan.  Remember that the economic commitment from Deer Valley and from the State Broadband Fund will not change.

From our perspective, while an underground solution may cause more disruption, it is a far superior long-term solution for a number of reasons.  We will not have to look at more overhead lines, weather and other overhead power line dangers will not impact service, and maintenance issues will be reduced.  My assessment is that underground was always the best solution; but it was viewed as cost prohibitive.  Brainstorm has now found a better way forward.

So what is the new plan?  Much like installing new infrastructure in towns, burying lines using the streets/roads eliminates many of the difficulties of using the sides of the roads such as driveways, underground power lines, ditches, culverts, steep terrain, etc.  (You may have seen fiber being installed on the east side of Wolf Creek Pass up the middle of the highway recently.)  Our plan will also use the middle of our roads.    The road trench will consist of a three-inch-wide cut, about 18 inches deep, that will literally be “sawed” into the roads using a rock saw on a large piece of equipment.  This is like what is used to cut a trench through solid rock.  Fiber conduit will be laid into the trench and covered and compacted with moist road gravel.  The “saw dust” will be gathered off the roads to reduce residual dust.  Numerous turns to the sides of the road will feed approximately 30 handholes or vaults in the right-of-way for fiber distribution to our homes.  The Road Committee and Board of Directors raised numerous issues with Brainstorm and the proposed contractor about the best way to ensure that our roads would not be compromised from this process.  In the end, the contractor will be contractually liable to Brainstorm, and Brainstorm will be liable to the Association as stipulated by our Agreement.  The Deer Valley Board approved this plan at last week’s regular meeting.

When will all this happen?  The new plan forward requires some different materials than were originally ordered back in March including underground conduit, different fiber, and of course the handholes to name a few.   Fortunately, these materials have been secured by Brainstorm.  The contractor is seeking additional equipment to install the conduit and is hopeful that the conduit can be installed in the roads yet this year.  This will be to our advantage as “wintering-in” the trenches should help ensure the best outcome for our roads.  If it is not feasible this year, the plan will be to install the conduit before any road work is completed early next spring.  Obviously, this phase must be done before the fiber is pulled through the conduit and trenched to each home.  Unfortunately, the delays this summer have pushed the project completion into next spring.

However, we are happy to say that some dirt has already been turned for the project!  Last Sunday, Bryan Ferguson volunteered his time and tractor/backhoe to dig the pad site into the hillside along Elk Valley Road.  This pad will house the equipment that will serve as the “brains” – power and signal distribution - for the backbone.  A concrete pad will be poured, and a retaining wall will be built around the cut into the hillside this fall.

I am pleased to finally be able to deliver some good news about the project after a summer of delays.  While those delays have necessarily pushed the project into next year, the way forward is finally becoming clear, and the result appears to be a very favorable outcome for Deer Valley.  I will update with more specifics as they become available.  Thanks to all for your patience and understanding.

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