

How much will Falmouth's network cost and who is going to pay for it?

Great question. Let's get this answered right off the bat. The feasibility study estimates approximately \$55 million to build a fiber optic Internet access network capable of serving every home and business in Falmouth. There are a few ways this network may be financed. It is important to note that all of these paths will require a town meeting approval separate from the MLP vote. Which is just to say that we're in this together and no single path to financing will be forced on the town.

Here are the main alternatives. 1) Government grants and loans. There is money for a network like Falmouth's in the federal bipartisan infrastructure bill now before Congress. State and other federal funds are also likely to be available. 2) Private enterprise, likely a smaller company. FalmouthNet has held discussions with several experienced companies that would be open to building a town-wide network with their own capital. 3) The town decides to float a municipal bond for all or part of the construction costs. In this case, in about five years, the network would be able to begin to pay back the bond on its own. 4) Some combination of the above.

It's important to note that Article 22 at this November's Town Meeting does not commit the town to any financing. Article 22 is simply a first vote to establish an MLP. We anticipate that future Town Meetings will consider how to finance our network.

Why does the Town of Falmouth need an MLP?

An MLP is the only way for Massachusetts towns to have a direct say in offering Internet service. The MLP strikes the right balance of town oversight and business independence. Why do we want an entity with town oversight? So we have reasonable oversight of rates and service offerings. So our town has flexibility to address the digital divide. So the MLP board can make sure our network is not throttled or tampered with.

Is there some sort of "big business" behind FalmouthNet?

There is absolutely no big business behind FalmouthNet. FalmouthNet is a group of volunteer Falmouth residents passionate about the need for reliable, affordable Internet in Falmouth. Through family, friends and colleagues FalmouthNet raised money to support a marketing effort, to effectively explain the multi-year effort to build the network we envision.

Who will run the day-to-day operations once the network is built?

The MLP board would hire a general manager who would oversee the business and technology of running the network. The MLP board has flexibility to hire an experienced Internet provider, build its own customer service and technical teams, or partner with MLPs from other towns.

Has this been done before in Massachusetts?

Yes! Over 20 Massachusetts towns have realized, "If we don't do it, no one else will." These include suburban Boston cities like Braintree, Reading and Concord, mid-sized cities like Westfield, Holyoke and Taunton, and small western Massachusetts towns like Leverett and Shutesbury.

What does Falmouth's network mean for local TV service? Can we still get local stations from Boston, etc.?

There are several streaming ways to get local stations. Apps, like YouTube TV, Fubo TV (which offers all the local sports) and Sling carry local stations. You can also download location station apps and cast them to your TV set. And, of course, you can keep your Comcast pay TV service even as you use Falmouth's Internet service.

What happens to Comcast/Verizon if we build Falmouth's network?

Comcast & Verizon stay, and with competition, they're likely to offer promotional rates for limited times and be more mindful of rate increases. Competition is good for consumers.

What towns in Massachusetts are doing this?

Fairhaven, Milton, Quincy, Northampton and several others have recently voted to approve MLP formation, in addition to the towns listed above who already offer their own Internet service.

Does the Town have to run our electric and gas utilities if approved?

Nope. There are no plans to include electrical and gas service through the MLP. If one day, some enterprising nonprofit wanted to offer electrical, it would need to pass another town meeting.

My Internet is fine, can you give me some examples of what kind of problems people are having?

Many neighborhoods have frequent outages. The Feasibility Study found that over 40% of Falmouth residents surveyed had an Internet outage of over one day in the last year. Our late-October storm knocked out Internet access for much of the town. A recent incident where a truck snagged a Comcast cable brought North Falmouth businesses to a standstill. These problems are symptoms of an inadequate network architecture. Falmouth's new network would be built to be more fault tolerant.

Many people in Falmouth have encountered network overloads and outages. Zoom meetings for school and work were frequently interrupted and sometimes impossible. During the pandemic, even Select Board meetings on Zoom had frequent problems.

Fiber will greatly, greatly expand the upload speeds we need for video conferencing and other activities that require rapid data transfer. If copper wire is like a 2-inch pipe, fiber is like a river 15-miles wide.

Furthermore, Falmouth's current Internet infrastructure can't keep up with Internet growth. Internet traffic is doubling about every three years. If you're not experiencing problems today, you will tomorrow. The network that FalmouthNet is planning will be upgradeable to handle Falmouth's needs well into the future.

How much will an MLP cost the town?

We are confident that any initial costs will be offset by substantial gains as the network turns cash-positive and is self-supporting. There may be minor items the town may need to pay for once established. For example, it would be in the town's best interest to engage a manager early in the construction phase (after a 2nd Town Meeting vote). However, even these costs may be covered by state or federal funding sources.

How much will Falmouth's network service cost subscribers?

We estimate \$60–70 monthly for 1,000 mbps download and 1,000 mbps upload. Compare that with Comcast, which offers 100 mbps down and only 5 mbps up for \$85 a month. But, the big takeaway here is that with town oversight, the town has a lot of say in pricing. For example, it could create pricing assistance for those in need. Why would we care about those in need, like service workers, retirees on fixed incomes and students on school lunch? Because we believe the Internet is no longer a "nice to have" but an every-day necessity.

Do I have to switch to Falmouth's network if this goes through?

No, you can stay with your provider. Remember, competition is good for consumers.

There are so many pressing issues in Falmouth. Why is this important?

Cape Cod is an island, connected to society by two bridges. And the Internet. Everything we do hinges on our ability to communicate via Internet. As the pandemic has shown us, education, healthcare, connection with family, collaboration to problem-solve issues like coastal erosion or recruitment of town staffing—*all of these things* require a reliable, affordable Internet.

Furthermore, building the network we envision will not interfere with Falmouth's other priorities. In fact, having a robust, reliable Internet access network will help Falmouth address its other priorities.