

resale value of the apparatus when it came time to sell it. He stated the long-term plan (Fiscal Year 2028/2029) was to combine R-27 (Rescue Truck) with the Engine Truck, noting that the Engine Truck could hold both rescue equipment, such as specialized medical trauma equipment and the Jaws of Life, as well as the engine equipment. He stated replacing the rails on R-27 was a stop gap to keep this piece of apparatus on the road explaining that because this truck transported equipment for the firefighters that it was an essential piece of apparatus. He concluded by stating that he appreciated the Finance Committee visiting the Fire Departments, noting by seeing the apparatus that it was easier for the Fire Departments to explain the uses of the equipment along with the issues they were having, noting that these conversations were beneficial to the relationship between the Fire Departments and the Town Council.

Councilor Ingalls stated she found the Finance Committee's visits to the Fire Department's informative. She noted a lot of homework has gone into the decision to replace the rails on R-27 to extend the life of the apparatus. She stated she appreciated all the work that was done to come to this decision.

VOTE:

2 – 0 Approved and so declared

RESULT: RECOMMEND TO APPROVE 2 – 0

MOVER: Andra Ingalls, Town Councilor

SECONDER: Bill Saums, Town Councilor

AYES: Ingalls, Saums

EXCUSED Ryan

Councilor Saums thanked Mr. Holyfield and the firefighters for attending tonight's meeting.

Mr. Holyfield, Mr. Mann, Mr. Smith and Mr. Muggeo left the meeting at 5:20 p.m.

5. MOTION to recommend the Town Council authorize the Mayor to submit an application for E-Rate funds and a matching State Library grant to cover the installation cost of a fiber network at Gales Ferry Library along with a request for E-Rate funds to supplement up to 50% of the annual maintenance and internet cost. Gales Ferry Library e-fiber installation.

Moved by Councilor Saums, seconded by Councilor Ingalls

Discussion: Councilor Saums stated in early December, 2021 Library Director Gale Bradbury spoke with him about installing a fiber network because they were having issues with the internet at the Gales Ferry Library. He stated to provide some data regarding the Library's request to install a fiber network that a Federal Communications Commission (FCC) Speed Test was conducted which showed that their internet download was 41.70 Mbps and the upload was 6.03 Mbps at the Gales Ferry Library, which was comparable to the type of internet service someone would have in their home.

Councilor Saums went on to explain that the Schools and the Bill Library were currently receiving excellent internet service from the Connecticut Educational Network (CEN), which was a high-speed fiber optic network, that was independent from ComCast and Frontier. However, he stated the Gales Ferry Library was not on a fiberoptic network

and when a number of people were in the Library using technology devices they get kicked off the internet because they were exceeding the upload and download of the Library's current internet carrier. Therefore, he stated the Connecticut State Library was strongly encouraging the Gales Ferry Library to get on a fiberoptic network, explaining that this would be expensive because the fiber would need to be installed all the way to the Gales Ferry Library. However, he stated the Connecticut State Library had money available to help libraries install a fiber network through the Connecticut Education Network (CEN) Program.

Library Director Gale Bradbury stated that she appreciated Councilor Saums' providing some background regarding the internet issues they were experiencing at the Gale Ferry Library. She stated the Covid-19 pandemic, which began in March, 2020, showed them that the number of people without internet was quite high. Therefore, she stated the State Library was pushing for libraries to provide good internet service for the community. She stated the increased demand also showed them the inadequacy of the cable internet at the Gales Ferry Library with the number of patrons using the computers for a variety of programs, which included remote education because the schools were closed to in-person learning, meetings for work, meetings for volunteer committees and organization, and a variety of other programs. She noted in Fiscal Year 2020/2021 the public computers at Gales Ferry were used 1,414 times.

Ms. Bradbury stated as Councilor Saums explained, the internet service was much slower at the Gales Ferry Library than at the Bill Library. She stated while hosting programs at the Gales Ferry Library using the Zoom video conference platform that it was not unusual to have the connection drop during an event.

Mrs. Bradbury reviewed the results of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) Speed Test that was taken through the computer networks on December 6, 2021 as follows:

- Bill Library: download 413.44 upload 772.29 using the CEN
- Gales Ferry: download 41.70 upload 6.03 using Cable internet

Mrs. Bradbury addressed the cost to connect to the Connecticut Educational Network explaining the cost for the installation of the entire fiber network was \$91,900 and the equipment cost was \$10,758. She stated the Connecticut State Library had money and would provide a match thru the E-Rate funding so that the entire installation cost (\$91,900) and equipment (\$10,758) would be funded. She also stated this grant funding would pay the \$7,200 annual fee for fiber maintenance for the first year. She stated beginning the second year that the Library was eligible to apply for the E-Rate discount each year, which has been 50% for the last few years. She stated the E-Rate discount would reduce the Gales Ferry Library's annual fiber maintenance cost to \$3,600 for 20 years. She stated this State of Connecticut Library Grant was a once in a lifetime opportunity that would change technology going forward in a big way for the town.

Mrs. Bradbury went on to state that the grant process required them to enter into a 20-year Agreement with Connecticut Education Network (CEN); however, she explained that they were not obligated to proceed with the CEN Agreement unless the grant funding was secured for the project. She noted that some concerns were raised about this type of technology being adequate for 20-years. However, she stated because the Federal Government has invested Billions of dollars for cyber infrastructure, and because the Connecticut Educational Network has committed to this fiber technology that it was believed that the technology would be around for the 20-year contract. She stated in addition to faster speeds the fiber technology was much more reliable because it operated with light instead of electricity, it may have the ability to increase the bandwidth if needed; and it was less likely to go down because of power outages.

Mrs. Bradbury stated the Bill Library had a fiber connection, however, she explained that the cost in Ledyard Center was lower because of the Bill Library's proximity of the fiber cable at the High School and Police Station/Town Hall. She stated for the Bill Library that she applied for and received the E-Rate discount for the fiber maintenance cost, noting that the annual maintenance fiber fee at Bill Library after the E-Rate discount was \$1,650.

Councilor Ingalls addressed the \$7,200 annual fee for the fiber maintenance and the CEN internet, which would be reduced to \$3,600 with the E-Rate discount for the 20-year contract. She questioned taking into consideration the Gales Ferry Library's current annual \$828 cost for the cable internet, what the actual net cost of the CEN technology would cost.

Mrs. Bradbury responded to Councilor Ingalls' question by providing an overview of the annual costs for the Gales Ferry Library noting that their current annual cost for cable internet was \$828 a year. She stated after the E-Rate discount the Connecticut Educational Network annual fiber maintenance fee would be \$3,600 per year, minus the current \$828, (cable internet) for a net annual cost of \$2,772. Councilor Ingalls noted based on this information that transitioning from cable internet service to the Connecticut Educational Network would be a net difference of \$55,000 during the 20-year contract.

Councilor Saums stated that he had mixed feelings about spending \$91,000 to install a fiber line because it was very expensive. However, he stated Ledyard's residents pay taxes to the State of Connecticut and to the Federal Government. He stated if Ledyard did not take these State of Connecticut Library grant dollars that the money would be given to another town, noting that the grant funding would be spent either way, therefore, he stated that this was a good opportunity to improve internet service at the Gales Ferry Library. He noted Library Director Gale Bradbury's comments about what the Covid-19 pandemic has taught them regarding the number of people who did not have internet service, and he commented on the importance to provide internet service for those who need to have access.

Mrs. Bradbury stated the E-Rate grant was a Federal Program that was funded by the telephone services. She explained that a certain percentage of everyone's phone bill was paid to Universal Service Fund, therefore, these funds were not actually from the State of Connecticut.

VOTE: 2 – 0 Approved and so declared