

**UTILITY ADVISORY TASK FORCE**  
**MEETING MINUTES**  
**September 22, 2021 - 7:00 PM**  
**Warren Craft Meeting Room**

The mission of the Utility Advisory Task Force (“Task Force”) is to assess the level of communication and service from the utility companies providing services to Bernards Township, identify areas of concern and in need of improvement, suggest ways to collect and report chronic outages and disruptions, facilitate and/or coordinate resident feedback to the Board of Public Utilities, and represent Bernards Township customers before the BPU when appropriate.

Present: Edelstein, Fischer, Guibord, Romano, Shah

Absent: Estrin, Fields, Monaco, Neiman

- 1. Call to Order**
- 2. Flag Salute**
- 3. Open Public Meeting Statement**
- 4. Approval of Minutes**

The July 21, 2021, meeting minutes were approved as submitted.

**5. Verizon Presentation – Inspection, Maintenance and Reliability Plan**

Mr. Bocchieri, State Government Affairs Director and Mr. Helms, Local Manager, gave a PowerPoint presentation on the Verizon utility system and infrastructure. Mr. Bocchieri noted that Basking Ridge is home to Verizon’s Corporate Center. He reported that Verizon Fios is available in most areas of Bernards Township and that 4 central offices (Bound Brook, Bedminster, Bernardsville and Millington) serve the area. Ms. Shah asked about copper wire replacements, for which Mr. Bocchieri said there is a 2-year plan to convert existing copper wire in the Township to fiber optic cable. Mr. Helms illustrated the different types of wires and cables used for internet, cable and phone lines. DSL-HIS is broad band service, 4GLTE is wireless service, and critical clients such as hospitals use fiber cable. 5G, which is needed to improve reliability for cell phone use, is the next generation of communication service and utilized at Verizon’s Corporate Center. Mr. Bocchieri explained the different types and locations of utility company wires on a utility pole.

Mr. Bocchieri reported on Verizon’s storm practices and procedures, emphasizing that safety is always the first priority. Before and during storms, notifications are sent to county OEM offices and that information is passed on to municipalities if needed. Verizon has established partnerships with electric utilities across the state, with which outage and damage and assessments are conducted during and after storms to coordinate field work, repairs and pole replacements.

Mr. Guibord noted the Task Force recently conducted a resident internet survey and asked if Verizon has plans to provide FIOS internet service in The Hills. Mr. Bocchieri explained that Verizon does an evaluation every year when creating their two-year plan. They take various factors into account when determining where to expand service. Verizon prefers to dig along the side of a road when installing underground cables instead of digging up the road. Ms. Shah asked how the Township can get fiber installed in The Hills. Mr. Bocchieri explained that area would be part of Verizon's review process and noted that since The Hills has no utility poles, the underground installation would take much longer and be more invasive and expensive than running wires on utility poles. Mr. Edelstein questioned further about cost. Mr. Guibord said the resident survey indicated that Hills residents would like Verizon to expand their FIOS internet service into The Hills. Ms. Shah asked if the density of people living in The Hills would be taken into consideration, and Mr. Guibord provided Mr. Bocchieri with a street map and population and contact information of Homeowner Associations ("HOA's) in the Hills. Mr. Helms concluded the presentation by describing the process of installing fiber cable underground and explained the inspection schedule for utility poles.

**6. Altice/Optimum Update - The Hills**

Mr. Guibord reported that Optimum has not yet scheduled meetings with HOA's in the Township section of the Hills.

**7. Review of Internet Survey Results**

The resident internet survey results, which have been provided to the Township Committee, were reviewed and discussed. The members discussed how to illustrate the commentary from the survey and sharing the results with Optimum and within The Hills. Mr. Fischer will provide the pie charts with a summary of comments relative to each pie chart.

**8. Public Comment**

None

**9. October Meeting Agenda**

Mr. Guibord will ask Mayor Fields to request a presentation by Altice/Optimum.

**10. Comments by Members**

None

**11. Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 8:16 PM.

**Submitted by Scott Guibord**

**On behalf of the Utility Advisory Task Force**