

A Message from First Selectman Bindelglass



Updated 7/16/21

Good afternoon.

As you know there has been tremendous disappointment in town with cable and internet service. As I have discussed, we have gone out and found a potential alternative provider, GO Net Speed. We have encouraged citizens to go to their web site and record their interest, and many of you have done so. Unfortunately, the town did not show enough interest for the company to consider wiring the town in 2022. 2023 is still a possibility but this is disappointing.

In recent weeks I've received a rising number of complaints—along with rising levels of frustration (to put it mildly) with Altice/Optimum Internet service failing many paying customers in Easton. I've heard from numerous residents that Altice/Optimum outages are impacting their livelihoods and their ability to stay connected; some residents need their WIFI connection for their home offices while others rely on the Internet for their phone service. One resident called me to complain that she was forced to drive to the firehouse to do an important conference call from her car because her service was out even though a technician had assured her the service was fine just the day before.

Another complained that even after numerous service calls, the issue has never been resolved. This is not only annoying, but a serious consumer protection issue because we pay a premium for WIFI service. In some cases, it impacts our businesses and often sudden outages disrupt our lives. Add to that the recent announcement that the company is considering lower connection speeds, which recently drew criticism from Connecticut's Attorney General.

Because the issue has become urgent to a relatively large number of residents, I plan to contact Altice/Optimum to request the following actions on behalf of Eastonites who rely on the company for WIFI service:

- I'll officially request an explanation for why our service has been so unreliable.

Residents have reported that after long wait times on hold to report service interruptions, customer service representatives dismiss their outage reports as "rolling outages" with no further explanation or estimate of when the outages will be resolved. Customers have also received a wide variety of explanations from service technicians about the source of the problem. It would be good to get an official explanation once and for all.

- I'll request an action plan from Optimum outlining the measures they intend to take to improve service in our area and a timeline to track their progress.

- I'll request that Altice/Optimum assume the burden of calculating the pro-rated refund to which users are entitled for the outages they experience each month. At present the burden is on customers to call the nearly unreachable customer service team to report that an outage has been resolved in order for a refund to be processed. Given the long wait times, this an unrealistic burden. "Rolling outages" should be accompanied by not just an explanation, but by automatic "Rolling Refunds."

- I'll request a community forum where Altice/Optimum can respond to community concerns and questions about this ongoing problem.

- I'll share Altice/Optimum responses and keep you updated on any information or remedies they provide.

Please continue to message me if these problems continue or indeed if service improves. In recent days our town social media pages have been filled with complaints about Altice/Optimum. I'll keep you informed of the company's responses.

I have also heard more lately about car break-ins and thefts. Chief Doyle reminds us that almost all of these events are preventable. Do not leave keys in your car. Do not leave your cars unlocked. We will make a concerted effort to keep reminding people of this. Would-be criminals go where the opportunity is. Let's do what we can to eliminate those opportunities. Also, if you see suspicious activity report it. One citizen has seen suspicious motorcycle riders with masks. Again, please report what you see.

We have spent time this week interviewing consultants to look at our emergency services. One of the focal points of those interviews is looking at what is called the ISO rating for neighborhoods, based on the town's ability to fight fires in a neighborhood. This is a major determinant of home insurance prices, and in the north end of Easton insurance rates are rising because of the town's perceived inability to fight fires due to distance from the firehouse and lack of available water. We are looking for help from the consultants we could engage on how to rectify this and in turn LOWER insurance costs for people in the north end of Easton.

Enjoy our farms and the many wonderful things to do on a summer weekend in Easton,
Dave

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