CLIENT: Pelican Bay

ASSIGNMENT: Pelican Bay Post Article Number Four on Selection of Summit

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HEADLINE: How Pelican Bay’s New Cable Company was Selected

BODY:

By now, a vast majority of Pelican Bay residents are aware and supportive of the community-wide conversion to Summit Broadband, though some might still wonder about the process through which the new cable and internet provider was selected. It’s a big decision for the community (and one which will benefit every resident far into the future), so it’s important that community members understand how the partnership came to be.

February of 2011 marked the beginning of a nearly three-year effort designed to place Pelican Bay at the forefront of communities nationally in terms of connectivity. It also signified the continuation of a more than 40-year commitment to ensuring Pelican Bay residents have only first-class amenities at their fingertips.

An examination of the community’s current cable and internet services had identified room for improvement and an opportunity to vastly increase speed and performance via the installation of a far more advanced network based on the latest in fiber optic technology. An upgrade of this magnitude would be an ambitious undertaking, but one that would pay dividends in terms of impact on property value and day to day life in the community. Thus, a plan to bring Pelican Bay “up to speed” was set in motion.

Though the plan would ultimately bring lightning fast network speeds to Pelican Bay, the process to attain it would be anything but. In fact, the plan, by design, would follow a lengthy timeline, providing for the ample time necessary to set qualifications, examine service options and execute a correct and cautious implementation process for the new company.

At the outset a Media Infrastructure Committee, formed specifically to spearhead these efforts, began the exploration process to determine the possibilities for the community with the aid of FPL FiberNet, a top telecommunication company and optical network provider. The group also partnered with a carefully selected, industry-recognized technical advisor and member of the Fiber to the Home Council who advised the committee on best solutions.

Extensive research and planning extended into 2012 when engineering firm Spectrum was consulted to survey every Pelican Bay association, examine wiring and, based on its findings, deliver a plan to significantly increase the efficiency and effectiveness of Pelican Bay’s system. The firm arrived at extremely high specifications for a new network build, far exceeding anything available in other Southwest Florida communities, as well as an expert plan for the overhaul itself.

Eleven months after the discovery process began, with trusted industry experts still by its side and armed with a strong plan, Pelican Bay embarked on the second phase of its journey: an expansive search for the right service supplier to bring the community into the future.

In January 2013, a Request for Proposal was issued to 26 potential suppliers, including the community’s current supplier. Nineteen responses were received in total, and each was reviewed by a cross functional RFP Evaluation Committee, made up of Media, Audit and Budget, Strategic Planning and Legal committee members. After much careful examination, three vendors emerged as top contenders: Comcast, CenturyLink and Summit Broadband.

Reference checks and in-depth review of each of the three vendors were conducted. Additional input on vendor plans and offerings was sought from Spectrum to ensure that the best in class from a technical standpoint was selected. Legal counsel was also sought to draw up a highly specific contract from both a technical and customer service standpoint.

Satisfied that due diligence had been performed, three years after Pelican Bay made the decision to bring fiber optics into the community, final analysis confirmed a clear winner stood head and shoulders above the rest in all areas. That company was Summit Broadband.

With Summit now selected and in place, the company is already hard at work and continues to prove why it is the right selection for Pelican Bay. All initial benchmarks for the project are being met, and the company’s effort to sign up and convert residents to the new system are going very smoothly, with many residents commenting favorably about the new company and the process.

As such, sign-ups are steadily progressing ahead of schedule, with nearly one third of residents having already taken the necessary steps to arrange service. And, both Summit and Pelican Bay are looking forward to reaching many more important milestones together. The impending 3,000th sign-up expected by April will be one to celebrate and excitement also continues to build surrounding official ground breaking on or around May 1, 2014.

The ever-changing landscape of technology is unpredictable by nature. However more than eight weeks since the commencement of sign-ups for Summit’s services, Pelican Bay continues to succeed where others in Southwest Florida Communities undergoing conversions of this kind have faltered. This is in large part due to the industry experts it aligned itself with from the onset, the unsurpassed technology being introduced and a realistic timeline for both planning an implementation, all of which combined will undoubtedly set the standard for network upgrades of comparable magnitude across the state and beyond.