

# **ConnectME Authority**

January 16, 2014 – Meeting Notes

## 1. Introductions

Authority Members: Jean Wilson, Chair, Tom Welch, Dick Thompson, Ralph Johnson, and Greg McNeal

Staff: Phil Lindley; Lisa Leahy; and David Maxwell

The meeting began at 1:02PM. Board members, Authority staff, and the public in attendance introduced themselves.

## 2. First Responder Network Authority (FirstNet) Project Status

Lisa Leahy presented a plan for administration of the FirstNet grant (Phase I, Planning) project on behalf of the Maine Emergency Management Agency (MEMA), citing the previous experience the Authority has with NTIA grant projects. Bruce Fitzgerald, Acting Director of MEMA, spoke to the value of the project and ConnectME staff involvement.

The Board unanimously approved the ConnectME Authority involvement as grant administrator for this project.

## 3. Advisory Council Report

Phil Lindley briefed the Board on a recent ConnectME Advisory Council meeting at which three topics were discussed:

- Revisions to the grant scoring guide
- Definitions of underserved and unserved
- Innovative or high-cost broadband installation funding

The Board unanimously approved revising the scoring guide in the Project Scope category, starting the point awards for broadband speed at the FCC Tier 3 level. No points will be awarded for grant projects that provide less than Tier 3, but those projects will not be precluded from applying as they may receive enough points in the other categories to receive a grant.

The Board unanimously approved changes to the definition of unserved and underserved areas. Unserved for grant application purposes will be any area that receives less than Tier 2 service (1.5 – 3 Mbps). Underserved will be defined as an area that receives less than Tier 5 (10 – 25 Mbps). Recognizing, however that unserved areas must be funded before underserved areas receive any funding.

Discussions of innovative broadband installations will continue by the Advisory Council and a recommendation will be made to the Board at a future meeting.

4. Broadband Capacity Building Task Force

David Maxwell briefed the Board on the completion of the majority of the Broadband Capacity Building project and Task Force, culminating in the release of comprehensive report regarding broadband utilization in Maine. Upcoming activities regarding the Task Force, include community forum events in several locations around the state, as well as release of the Capacity Building Task Force report sometime in November.

5. Broadband Sustainability Fund (BBSF)

Board members were informed of the December 30, 2013, decision of the Public Utilities Commission in the Authority's request for investigation. The PUC order stated that the PUC does not possess the authority to enforce the collection of the BBSF fee. A letter from Fairpoint, included in the meeting packet distributed at the meeting, requests the ConnectME Authority determine action it may take in addressing the matter. The Authority is seeking guidance from the Office of the Attorney General.

The Board tabled the matter until the next meeting. Member Welch abstained from voting as the BBSF is an active matter within the PUC.

Phil Lindley briefed Board members of a procedural issue regarding requests for funds from the BBSF. By statute, funds collected in the previous year are to be disbursed by December 31<sup>st</sup> of the following year. In order to allow sufficient time to comply with this requirement, the Board was asked to adopt a policy requiring that requests for disbursements from the BBSF be made five (5) business days in advance of December 31<sup>st</sup>.

The Board approved this policy. Member Welch abstained from voting for the above-cited reason.

6. Executive Director Report

Phil Lindley presented the proposed 2013-2014 budget, with the caveat that the document will need to be revised to reflect the FirstNet budget (see items #1 above). The revised budget will be presented at the next Board meeting.

The Board unanimously approved the proposed budget.

The draft report required by the Office of Program Evaluation and Government Accountability (OPEGA) was presented for approval. The Board unanimously approved the report for submission.

Financial statements were presented for review.

7. Public Comment

One comment regarding availability of the letter from Fairpoint was raised. The letter was not received prior to the posting of the Board material, so it was not available electronically for viewing prior to the meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 2:36PM.