

ConnectME Authority
October 29, 2013 – Meeting Notes

1. Introduction of ConnectME Authority Members and Staff

Authority Members: Ralph Johnson, acting chair; Greg McNeal, Tom Welch, and Dick Thompson. Jean Wilson was absent.

Staff: Phil Lindley; Lisa Leahy; and David Maxwell.

The meeting began at 1:06PM. Board members, Authority staff, and the public in attendance introduced themselves.

2. Annual Audit Review – Macpage, LLC

Bob Dube of Macpage reviewed audit documents with Board members. Documents consisted of the:

- financial report;
- single audit report;
- management letter; and
- SAS14 letter.

Bob Dube gave a detailed explanation of each document, its purpose, and bearing on the ConnectME annual audit. Bob said that the audit provided a “clean opinion” of the Authority’s financial statement. His review of the approved annual budget showed that it was accurate to the actual budget. He expressed some concern that the broadband sustainability fund (BBSF) would need more scrutiny in the next audit as the amounts in the fund will likely be significant. He also recommended that the Authority staff work with the PUC staff to verify the accuracy of reported revenues by the providers.

The Board unanimously approved the documents and the results of the audit.

3. Broadband Capacity Building Task Force

David Maxwell informed the Board members of upcoming activities regarding the Task Force, including community forum events in several locations around the state, as well as release of the Capacity Building Task Force report sometime in November.

4. LD 876 “Dig Once” Work Group Status

David also informed the Board members of the composition of the work group, as well as the action plan, comprised of research, individual interviews, and group meetings, resulting in a report to the Legislature in February of 2014. The first group meeting is to be held on November 14, 2013.

5. Health Information Technology Collaboration with DHHS

David provided an update regarding the survey of healthcare providers relative to broadband availability. He also discussed plans to pursue grant program opportunities to collaborative initiatives among healthcare providers, broadband providers, and others.

6. First Responder Network Authority (FirstNet) Project Status

An explanation of the FirstNet plan (a single nationwide public safety broadband network) was shared with Board members. The role the Authority could perform to assist the Maine Department of Public Safety (DPS) with FirstNet was discussed, with notation of successful past federal grant program awards by the Authority. Following additional discussions with DPS and other states, the Authority will develop a more detailed plan for further discussion at the January 2014 Board meeting.

7. Executive Director Report

The Board approved the revised Grant Scoring Guide, which provides more objectivity and is technology neutral for use in upcoming grant rounds.

There will be a December 2013 meeting of the Authority staff and the Advisory Council (AC) to discuss promotion of innovative broadband installations (as work continues to reach the remaining 7% of unserved households) and definition of and funding for "underserved" areas. Dick Thompson provided comments regarding these types of installations and that the AC might consider how the Authority would fund small group or individual grant applications. The AC will also discuss the definition and possible funding of underserved areas, possibly revising the definition of unserved, and raising the Tier Level for funded projects.

8. Public Comment

The Authority received "kudos" from the public for providing Board meeting material in advance of the meeting. This practice will continue for future Board meetings.

The meeting adjourned at 2:29PM.