

# CONNECTMAINE

## September Meeting Notes

23 September 2020

Zoom Recording: [https://networkmaine.zoom.us/rec/share/zOxNotAfyHgOBscxRcqwmOAdDa9nSr9K9i31rU1\\_QuSvv3lCCAxjzWS0Ot8nbvjh.wDCEc\\_8alGJCxujU?startTime=1600869741000](https://networkmaine.zoom.us/rec/share/zOxNotAfyHgOBscxRcqwmOAdDa9nSr9K9i31rU1_QuSvv3lCCAxjzWS0Ot8nbvjh.wDCEc_8alGJCxujU?startTime=1600869741000)

## Authority Members

Nick Battista, Chair  
Fred Brittain  
Susan Corbett  
Heather Johnson  
Jeff Letourneau  
Liz Wyman

## Introductions of Members and Staff

Nick Battista, Susan Corbett, Jeff Letourneau, Liz Wyman, Heather Johnson, Peggy Schaffer, Stephenie MacLagan

## Meeting Kickoff

Maine Climate Council Report—Nick  
Constituent Story—Nick

## Notes of Last Meeting

Approval: Susan motioned, Jeff 2<sup>nd</sup>, 5:0 vote

## Review of Operations

Monthly Financial Report—Stephenie  
Executive Director's Report—Peggy

- Maine Community Foundation planning grants process
- Mapping and data update
- Rulemaking update

Action: Staff will announce rulemaking timeline once finalized

## Transformation Discussion

Review of the status and process—Doug Birgfeld

Board Discussion Welcomed

- Setting objectives that inform decision-making
- Timing of implementation

Action: Potential stakeholder meeting, tentatively mid-October

Public Comments Welcomed

## Annual Budgeting Discussion

Review of initiatives—Peggy

- Accountability methods and costs
- ReConnect commitments
- End-of-the-road extension projects

Action: Peggy will share other states' definitions of end-of-road or line extensions

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Infrastructure grants discussion—Nick

Planning grants discussion—Nick

Board Discussion Welcomed

- Staff capacity and resources for researching processes
- Inclusion of available funds in planning grants announcement
- Use of bond funds
- Annual Budget with estimated cost of initiatives

Action: Staff will draft annual budget that includes planning grants and other initiatives

## **Triennial Plan Discussion**

Outlining components—Stephenie

Board Discussion Welcomed

- Ways of engaging stakeholders on various topics during strategic planning
- Aligning timelines of infrastructure grants with strategic planning
- Public engagement in preparing this process and in the strategic planning

Action: Jeff & Susan willing to work with Stephenie on refining timeline and process

## **Board Priorities Reviewed**

Aligning grants and accountability

Clarifying bond processes

Action: Roll these above priorities into the Transformation Process priority

## **No Other Business**

## **Public Comments**

Reminders

- Meeting materials are posted on our website. Notes are posted within one week of approval by the board. The link to the recording of the meeting is contained in the notes posted.

Topics Raised

- End-of-road or line extension projects
- Aligning public engagement events of rule hearing, transformation discussion, determining grants processes, etc.
- Updating the website
- Aligning multiple communities' timelines to encourage regional projects
- Messaging around the bond and processes

**ConnectMaine Authority**  
Financial Report as of 9.16.2020

<u>Cash Receipts</u>	<u>July</u>	<u>August</u>	<u>September</u>	<u>October</u>	<u>November</u>	<u>December</u>	<u>January</u>	<u>February</u>	<u>March</u>	<u>April</u>	<u>May</u>	<u>June</u>	<u>Total FY21</u>
Assessments	-	-	400,000.00	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	400,000.00
Interest Income	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Total Receipts</b>	-	-	400,000.00	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	400,000.00
<b>Expenses</b>													
Personnel Services	8,216.97	11,594.12	15,282.60	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	35,093.69
Professional Services/Solix	1,500.00	1,500.00	1,500.00	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4,500.00
Professional Services/DAFS	-	2,574.00	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2,574.00
Travel	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
General Operations	-	(525.00)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	(525.00)
Technology/Salary/Contracts through OIT	339.30	234.31	389.30	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	962.91
Cellphone Plans	-	80.02	8.18	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	88.20
Grants	143,575.85	5,000.00	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	148,575.85
<b>Total Expenses</b>	153,632.12	20,457.45	17,180.08	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	191,269.65
<b>Operating Surplus/(Deficit)</b>	(153,632.12)	(20,457.45)	382,819.92	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Fund/Cash Balance</b>	1,297,647.93	1,277,190.48	1,660,010.40	1,660,010.40	1,660,010.40	1,660,010.40	1,660,010.40	1,660,010.40	1,660,010.40	1,660,010.40	1,660,010.40	1,660,010.40	1,660,010.40

Cash Balance brought forward 1,451,280.05

<b>Unliquidated Contractual Obligations</b>	<b>(689,667.00)</b>
<b>Projected Ending Fund/Cash Balance</b>	<b>970,343.40</b>
<b>Additional Obligations not in Report</b>	<b>306,114.31</b>
Remaining salary	195,014.31
Tablets with MIFI	30,000
Sewall through OIT	31,100
GPCOG Speedtests	30,000
MISC	20,000
<b>Balance</b>	<b>664,229.09</b>

<b>Initiatives</b>	
Mapping	50,000
Digital Literacy	50,000
Community Planning Support	25,000
Federal Match 2020	500,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>625,000</b>

## Executive Director's Report

23 September 2020

Peggy Schaffer, Executive Director

## Authority Members

Nick Battista, Chair

Fred Brittain

Susan Corbett

Denise Garland

Jeff Letourneau

Liz Wyman

### Active grant awards

Final invoice for Alna's 2019 grant has been paid.

### Federal funding update

ReConnect announcements should come this fall. We met with Maine Community Foundation and Island Institute about how to support the grant awards through the USDA process. As a pilot program, ReConnect has no rulemaking process; USDA moved the program under their RUS loan, which hasn't worked closely with either the General Field Representatives or state directors on implementation. This process isn't designed for projects like Maine's, \$1 million grants versus their usual \$15 million loans. Island Institute and Axiom Technologies are working closely with the towns who've been awarded and submitted ReConnect applications. We have also had conversations with our Congressional Delegation and Maine's state director on the issues, in an attempt to resolve them.

### Local and regional planning support

Maine Community Foundation convened a review team, which includes Susan Corbett, Nick Battista, Kerem Durdag and myself, with Maggie Drummond. We met to review 22 MCF planning grant applications. We all agreed that having a consistent team makeup was important to getting a better picture of what ConnectMaine, MCF and Island Institute planning grants have been funding. Issues like mapping and surveys are pretty consistent across applications, an opportunity to explore possible economies of scale for these efforts.

On Sept. 24 I will be presenting (live!) at the Kennebec Valley Council of Governments annual meeting, about the economic benefits of broadband and next steps for expansion in the area, which includes Kennebec and Somerset Counties.

Recent community broadband planning group conversations include Maine West and Mount Vernon. On Sept. 30 I will be presenting broadband expansion models to the Maine West Boot Camp. The communities of Hope and Union have been encouraged to talk to one another and may be interested in a planning grant to move forward.

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## **Federal partnership activities**

We are pushing forward the Bridge Act, which provides funding to states through a block grant formula, with Senator King who's working closely with CO Senator Bennett. Both Governor Mills and Governor Polis are fully on board, having talked with Governor Cuomo's Office and other governors about getting the National Governors Association to endorse the proposal.

National conversations are now focusing on FCC mapping and the next FCC Broadband Report. Comments from the Rural Congress and Broadband Connects America Coalition both included several stories from Maine on lack of connectivity and the impact on real people. ConnectMaine signed on to the BCA comments. We also signed onto comments about digital literacy and tracking costs from the National Digital Inclusion Alliance. NTIA's State Broadband Leaders Network met virtually this fall. Among the interesting programs in other states were presentations from Colorado's DOT on building middle-mile, from Illinois on including cost and adoption in their grant process and from Wisconsin on their efforts around digital literacy and inclusion. The National Broadband Availability Map will be expanded, and training on using the map will be provided in October. The meeting also included updates from the Senate and House committees on infrastructure.

After the National Broadband Report's call for stories toward comments to the FCC caught national attention, Nick and I were interviewed were a PPH article:

<https://www.pressherald.com/2020/09/15/to-correct-fcc-errors-mainers-tell-their-stories-of-poor-internet-service/>

## **Staff and program management**

ConnectMaine has started to meet with the Office of Information Technology's project management team to develop a "charter" or workplan with goals and objectives rooted in our statute. This will directly support thoughtful implementation of the next round of grants. We have been having multiple conversations about implementing greater accountability, which we will need to do as we deploy significantly larger amounts of funding made possible by the first bond recently passed by voters.

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## **Mapping and data update**

Support, and proposed contract with Greater Portland Council of Governments, has been provided to the Maine Broadband Coalition to rollout a crowdsourcing campaign to gather speedtests across the state. This would be piloted in the Maine West area and with Island Institute. The contract seeks not only the speedtests and mapping platform but the required management and promotion of this campaign, which we hope will launch in October.

VETRO has been having conversations about expanding the access and use of their FiberMap, which helps identify costs, designs and services. This would be a big deal for communities who are trying to figure out costs and structure for projects. It could create a more level playing field, or communication tool, between communities and internet service providers for expanding broadband.

## **Rulemaking update**

Within the week, Assistant Attorney General Emily Atkins anticipates an update on the draft rule submitted on Sept 8.

# ConnectMaine Program Expansion Project

## Charter Summary



# The Role of the PMO

- **Guides the Decision Making Process**
- **Critical Success Factors**
- **Organizes the work**
- **Creates the elements of the plan**
  - **Communication Plan**
  - **Schedule**
  - **Budget**
  - **Resource Plan**
  - **Risk Control and Mitigation**





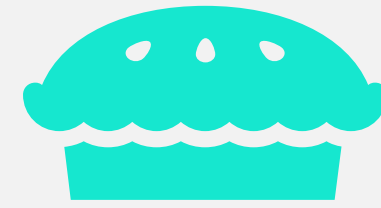
Since you mentioned it, What is a Charter?



# Project Overview

- ConnectMaine recently received a \$15M bond.
- The core of the project is to determine and administer how & where to disburse these funds.
- This must be a transparent process whose outcome will be manifestation of the Authority's mission and priorities.
- A wide stakeholder group, beyond the Board, and representing interested parties should be engaged to define the key objectives that will inform possible changes to the structure of the program, the award process and the measurement of impacts for expanding the use and availability of quality connectivity.

# How we prepared



Created a Work Breakdown Structure:  
Example (Making a Pie)



Analyzed the Statutes and the Action  
Plan



Met with ConnectMaine to clarify our  
questions and verify our assumptions

# Goals and Objectives

- GOAL: Broadband service be universally available in the State
  - OBJECTIVE: Determine the % of coverage we can achieve with bond funds
  - OBJECTIVE: Determine the criteria for broadband site selection priorities

# Goals and Objectives

- GOAL: Determine a set of standards we will apply in our selections
  - OBJECTIVE: Determine the standards for security and privacy we will use
  - OBJECTIVE: Determine the standards we will use for reliability
  - OBJECTIVE: Determine the desirable model to achieve as competitive and fair broadband environment
  - OBJECTIVE: Define standards for reliability that considers
    - Building infrastructure capacity to allow for the growth of future technology needs
    - A cost structure that allows for wide spread adoption and maintenance

# Goals and Objectives

- GOAL: Promote adoption of broadband service by residents, businesses and institutions
  - OBJECTIVE: Address digital inclusion in grant process
- GOAL: Articulate the economic benefit of broadband throughout the State
  - OBJECTIVE: During strategic planning, investigate the impact of broadband on relevant economic indicators, e.g., realty activity, household incomes and municipal savings

# Deliverables



A documented and approved grant process that aligns with objectives



Updated applications and other artifacts



Updated scoring criteria



Grant management tools implemented



Communication Plan