

ConnectME Authority

June 19, 2015 – Meeting Notes

1. Introductions

Authority Board Members: Jean Wilson, Chair; Andy Hagler; and Ralph Johnson. Dick Thompson joined by phone at 2:25PM.

Authority Staff: Phil Lindley, Executive Director; Lisa Leahy, Associate Executive Director; and David Maxwell

Board members, Authority staff, and Daisy Mueller, a representative of the James W. Sewall Company, introduced themselves, as did members of the public.

The agenda items were taken out of sequence in order for Dick Thompson to participate in discussions.

6. Executive Director Report

Three requests for grant extensions from UNITEL (for projects in Newburgh, Thorndike, and Troy) were approved unanimously.

The Fund Performance Report was reviewed.

A letter of engagement from MACPAGE for the annual audit was discussed. The Broadband Sustainability Fee will be included in the audit.

The Board was updated on the status of the Broadband Sustainability Fee case with GWI.

A press release by Pioneer Broadband regarding a fiber expansion project in Aroostook County was mentioned.

Board members inquired about progress reporting on issued grants. Staff will follow up on acquiring a system for grantees to do so.

2. Legislative Activity

Phil Lindley gave an update of legislative activity.

L.D. 465 regarding the Broadband Sustainability Fee has been passed in both chambers and signed by the Governor, and will become effective ninety (90) days after adjournment of the Legislature.

L.D. 1063 has been passed once in both chambers with no funding included.

L.D. 1185 has been passed once in both chambers with no funding included.

The Board authorized pursuit of a sole source contract with the James W. Sewall Company for the creation of a triennial strategic plan, due to the tight period for completion. Sewall has extensive experience and a long relationship with the Authority. A \$30,000.00 limit was placed on this. It is to commence with the solicitation of public input and presumes passage of L.D. 1063.

3. Municipal Broadband Discussion

Board members expressed a desire for more guidance on this through the legislative process. It was noted that the upcoming triennial strategic plan should help guide the decisions and ensuing processes. Also, facilitation of telehealth should be included in the plan.

4. Unserved versus Underserved

After considerable discussion, the Board concluded that the grant scoring guide should be revised to clearly state that a minimum of symmetrical 10 Mbps download and upload is required in order for a grant application to be considered. This will be reflected in a revised grant application.

A draft scoring guide will be prepared and distributed for comment.

7. Public Comment

Several members of the audience offered comments, summarized below:

- the strategic planning process should incorporate opportunity for feedback
- the 10/10 standard for grants should allow for achieving it in a phased manner
- innovative approaches to providing broadband to increase service and adoption should be considered
- a 10/10 standard is a mid-term (as opposed to short-term or long-term) approach
- municipal networks create a competitive market; the intent for competition (broadband providers or users of broadband service) should be addressed
- the grant program should differentiate between residential and business users
- achieving the 10/10 standard will be expensive and will be feasible in only certain areas
- an educational component is needed to promote the value of broadband

- there should be a better way to manage and utilize existing unlit fiber already available in municipalities
- symmetrical service (e.g. 10/10) is not always best or needed by consumers versus businesses.
- municipalities need a clearing house of information for assistance and to stay current on changes in technology
- though no funding for planning grants is included in legislation which is presumed to become law, funding of planning grants should not be discounted.
- meeting agenda and materials should be distributed one to two weeks in advance of each meeting
- many are watching ConnectME Authority activity with interest

Those offering the above comments included:

Mark Ockerman, Arrowsic

Page Clason, Islesboro

Jim Nimon, Sanford Economic Growth Council

Steven Boody, Virtual Managed Solutions

John Lawrence, Waldoboro

Michael Griegs, AiroComm

Sarah Davis, Fairpoint

Ben Sanborn, Telecommunications Association of Maine

Tim Schneider, OPA

Vern Zeigler, Islesboro

The meeting adjourned at 4:17PM.