

ConnectME Authority

September 17, 2013 – Meeting Notes

1. Introduction of ConnectME Authority Members and Staff

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

Staff: Phil Lindley; Lisa Leahy; and David Maxwell

The meeting began at 1:32PM. Board members, Authority staff, and the public in attendance introduced themselves.

2. Grant Challenge Review – FairPoint Communications

- FairPoint submitted a certified challenge to a grant award to Premium Choice for Kokadjo/Frenchtown (\$24K) stating that since FP has plans to build out in the same area and households, the award is unnecessary. A motion to cancel the grant to Premium Choice was offered and seconded. The vote to do so was unanimous.
- Pioneer Broadband. Due to increased costs beyond those which were projected, Pioneer Broadband requested additional funds to complete work planned for three previously awarded grants: Presque Isle – McBurnie RT; Masardis – Rt 11 RT; and Caribou – Madawaska Rd RT. Discussion regarding the scoring process and the ranking of the grant awards occurred. Members agreed that the grant request should be rescored to determine if the ranking of the grant would change, thus potentially altering the final award. The Authority agreed that these grant supplements are “one-offs” due to circumstances and costs beyond the control (and not foreseeable) of the applicant, and therefore non precedential. The Authority also agreed to grant the supplemental requests if a review by the Executive Director showed that the awards would still have been granted with revised scoring. The total grant award increase for the three grants will be \$19,800.
Note: On September 18, 2013, the Executive Director reported to the Authority that the rescoring of the three grant awards did not cause any of them to fall below the grant award scoring level for the respective grant rounds, therefore the supplemental amounts will be made available.

3. Broadband Capacity Building Task Force Review

The Board was briefed on the upcoming release of the Task Force report and the associated publicity plan.

The “Dig Once” work group membership has been contacted and informed of the information gathering and collaboration approach to be used in order to produce a report for the Legislature by February 1, 2014. The group cannot officially begin its task until October 9, 2013.

4. Health Information Technology Collaboration with DHHS

The Board was reminded of the Memorandum of Understanding with the DHHS Office of the State Coordinator (OSC) for Health Information Technology. ConnectME and the OSC work collaboratively to identify areas of the state where lack of broadband availability impedes health care providers from meeting the requirements of the Affordable Care Act. The two organizations are developing a grant proposal for funding from the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to advance broadband and telehealth in Maine. The ConnectME Authority will likely be the applicant for the grant award. A consortium of health care providers in Maine is working with The Authority and the OSC.

5. Planning Project Draft Needs Assessment

Randy clear of the James W. Sewall Company presented an overview of the 2013 Needs Assessment, sharing data and statistics in a graphical manner. Questions were asked and answered. The document will be finalized later this fall, with a presentation to the Authority at its next meeting.

6. Annual Audit Status

The Board was advised that staff of Macdonald Page will be on site later in the week to conduct the annual audit. Preliminary information was provided as requested. More detailed information is expected for the next meeting.

7. Executive Director Report

- MPUC Broadband Sustainability fund Investigation – the Authority is awaiting a decision from the PUC.
- NTIA Grant Administration Support Contract: grant administrative support is shifting to an outside provider with previous with the Maine State Library. No disruption in service level is expected. Cost is projected to be similar to past costs.
- Revised Scoring Guide – as this item was not on the distributed agenda, the topic was held until the November meeting.
- Financial Statements – documents were reviewed.

8. Public Comment Period

It was requested that copies of the financial statements and budget documents presented for discussion be available at future meetings. It was also requested that the meeting agenda and associated items be posted to the ConnectME Authority WEB page in advance of each meeting. Meeting materials will be available at least three days prior to each meeting.

Pioneer Broadband will hold an open house for its fiber project in Big Lake Township. An invitation to attend was extended to all.

The meeting adjourned at 2:56PM.