

# CONNECTME



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Dick Thompson  
**Chair**

**Authority Members** - Denise Garland - Susan Woods - Bruce Williamson – Jon Richard - Ralph Johnson

February 22, 2019

## ConnectME Authority – Meeting Notes

1. Introductions: Authority Board Members: Dick Thompson, Sue Woods, Ralph Johnson, Denise Garland and Jon Richard.

Authority Staff: Heather Johnson and Brooke Johnson.

Members of the public were asked to introduce themselves.

2. Approval of Strategic Plan: Heather Johnson explained that we received a few comments on our new Strategic Plan and we tried to incorporate those edits. Most of the feedback we received was language change suggestions and a need for clarification. We added a section called “other thoughts” suggested by the Small Business Advocate to allow us some flexibility regarding technology. TAM submitted comments and would like to discuss their suggestions. Heather Johnson explained that the EUT has offered us a working session with no LD’s to discuss all the broadband legislation and our Strategic Plan could be a useful tool for that discussion. Ben Sanborn explained his suggested edits for the Strategic Plan. The first concern or need for clarification is the cost estimate structure in this strategic plan makes it appear that the Authority will be moving forward in the how to expand the coaxial network direction and Ben Sanborn wanted to know if that was a conscious shift? Is ConnectME just using this proxy to get a dollar figure or was that not the intention? Ralph Johnson pointed out that ConnectME is technology agnostic. Ben Sanborn stated that TAM just wants clarification on this topic. Ralph Johnson stated that this is just a methodology to explain cost not our favorite technology. Heather Johnson explained that she fixed that section this morning but if the language doesn’t suffice we can change it. She also explained that we should have a business model in the next four weeks so this cost estimate concern would be void. Ben Sanborn mentioned there was some discussion on creating a special envoy and how do you track the benefit and create measurable plans to track your return on investment. Ben Sanborn suggested that showing accountability to the Legislature so at the end of this strategic plan we can prove what worked to strengthen your argument. Dick Thompson suggested we add that we will report annually in our Annual Report to the Legislature to the success of this strategy. Denise Garland suggested we add that suggested language under the Review and Update Action Plan Annually section. Dick Thompson suggested we combine the Open-Access Dark Fiber Cost Estimate and Cost Estimate to TV Hybrid Fiber/Coax Infrastructure. Heather Johnson agreed we have given too much detail and we can re-write that section. Heather Johnson said we will send an updated version out to everyone and Dick Thompson suggested we put an updated version on our website and bring the final version back to approve at our next meeting.

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3. Grant Scoring Criteria: Heather Johnson explained that due to the eligibility criteria changing to 25/3 Mbps we thought it be best to update our scoring guides. We had a broad group of individuals involved and they worked on both the Planning grant guides and the Infrastructure grant guides. Heather Johnson explained that we tried to stay as closely in line with the current scoring guides while still making the necessary changes. For the Infrastructure guides we moved some points around to other categories, created a few sliding scales and updated the project scope section to better align with the new eligibility criteria. The Planning grant guide was updated to be a sliding scale instead of full points which was producing every grant applicant to have the same score. Dick Thompson opened the discussion for suggested edits/comments. The suggested edits for both guides were, change Community Support to Engagement & Participation, change the word advertised to actual, strike the last 5 words in the Community Support section for planning and move the Financial Commitment scoring from Project Scope to Cost-Benefit and change the Project Focus language to align with the Rulemaking. Ralph Johnson motions to approve the Infrastructure Grant scoring criteria and Denise Garland Seconds the motion. All were in favor. The Board suggested we make all the suggested changes to the Planning grant guide and bring the final draft to the next meeting for approval.
4. Approval to Open Grant Round and Set an Amount: Heather Johnson recommended we wait to get a new Executive Director before we open the next grant round. She described the waterfall financials to see where the ConnectME Authority is at financially and to start thinking of what we could approve for our next grant round. Heather Johnson described maybe using some of this money as match if necessary. Dick Thompson suggested we revisit this topic at the next Board meeting.
5. Broadband Mapping Update: Heather Johnson explained our progress so far with the crowd sourcing data and that we have received over 250 submissions. Heather Johnson explained that NTIA has selected 8 states for their Phase 1 mapping pilot and Maine is one of them due to the aggressive approach we are taking to get broadband mapping data at the address level. Heather Johnson talked about how we have partnered with Vetro Fiber and Cost Quest so we will be able to look at these 25/3 Mbps & 10/1 Mbps buckets and see what it would cost to build.
6. Approval of January 25, 2019 Minutes and Review of Financial Report: Denise Garland motions to approve the minutes for January 25, 2019 and Sue Woods seconds the motion. All were in favor. Brooke Johnson explained the January financial activity. The ConnectME Authority received \$270,847.25 in assessment money and paid \$51,167.50 in grant payments. The ending balance for the month of January was \$1,685,005.33.
7. Director Report: Heather Johnson provided the Board with a Legislative update explaining that the EUT thought it would be best to have a Broadband work session with no LD's sometime in the near future. LD 31 that changes ConnectME from Major Substantive to Routine Technical got passed and LD 383 the ConnectME Rulemaking bill has a work session coming up in the next few weeks. The Legislative Breakfast was moved to March 19<sup>th</sup> at 8 am in the Cross Café. Heather Johnson Discussed the CMP corridor and wanted to put it on the radar for the Board and suggested that ConnectME be prepared for those conversations to come in the next month. Heather Johnson talked about asset ownership for ConnectME Authority if we are going to applying for the Re-Connect money. Dick Thompson suggested that we have legal representation come and speak to the Board on this topic. Heather Johnson explained that in the last grant round we awarded money to

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the Our Katahdin project and we have sense found out that there was a challenge in the way we scored it versus what the actual project is. The application said 178 homes/businesses to be served when in reality it is only 16 businesses. Dick Thompson suggested that we rescind the award and take that action and vote on it and then figure out what we want to do with the balance. Ralph motions to rescind the award and Denise Garland seconds the motion. All were in favor. Brooke Johnson explained that the other option we could do would be to award the next grant recipient in line which would be the Bucksport project. Bucksport originally asked for \$72,000 but are willing to do the project for the \$62,820. Dick Thompson suggested we either take no action and let the money sit for the next round or do we want to award this money to Bucksport. Ralph Johnson motions to take the \$62,820 and move it to the next grant round and Denise Garland seconds the motion. All were not in favor, motion denied. Jon Richards motions to award the available money to Bucksport and Sue Woods seconds the motion. All were in favor. Dick Thompson suggested we define this process in a policy so we know what to do going forward. Denise Garland informed everyone that we have 12 applicants for the Executive Director position.

8. Other Business: N/A
9. Public Comments: Ben Sanborn wanted to make sure that it remains a focus in connecting with the private companies regarding the Re-Connect Grant Program because they are potential applicants and they want to be an effective part of the solution. He also discussed that TAM proposed an amendment to one of the LD's and suggested \$10 M a year from the general fund to fund the ConnectME Authority. Sarah Davis discussed that some of the larger providers are not well positioned to join in that work that is government owned.

Board meeting adjourned at 3:50 p.m.