

CONNECTME



State of Maine
ConnectME Authority
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Dick Thompson
Chair

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

March 22, 2019

ConnectME Authority – Meeting Notes

1. Introductions: Authority Board Members: Dick Thompson, Sue Woods, Denise Garland and Nicholas Marquis.

Authority Staff: Heather Johnson, Brooke Johnson and Peggy Schaffer.

Members of the public were asked to introduce themselves.

2. Executive Director Introduction: Heather Johnson introduced Peggy Schaffer and briefly described her background as the Small Business Advocate for the Secretary of State and her background with the Maine Broadband Coalition and how she has been working with Maine communities over the past few years.
3. Asset Ownership - William Laubenstein: Heather Johnson explained that the ConnectME Authority has the authority by statute to own assets and during the next few months ConnectME might need to have this discussion. For example, the USDA grants require you to own assets, so we thought it would be a good idea to have this discussion now. The statute is very clear but at the last Board meeting it was suggested to have representation from the Attorney General's Office during this conversation. Bill Laubenstein confirmed that under our general powers which are very broad, it clearly states ConnectME can own assets. Heather Johnson asked if revenue is generated can we reallocate that out. Bill Laubenstein said yes. It would have to be put into your fund and used to fulfill your mission.
4. Approval of Strategic Plan: Brooke Johnson explained that at the last Board meeting there were 2 suggested edits and those edits have been made. Denise Garland motions to approve the 2019-2021 Strategic Plan and Sue Woods seconds the motion. All were in favor.
5. Approval of Grant Scoring Guides: Brooke Johnson explained that at the last Board meeting the Board approved the Infrastructure grant scoring guide with all the suggested edits and a final version is in the packet. But at the last meeting we did not approve the Planning grant guide. Brooke Johnson made all the suggested edits/changes and the Board needs to approve it. Sue Woods motions to approve the Planning grant scoring guide and Denise Garland seconds the motion. All were in favor.
6. Lakes Region Phase 1 Discussion - Mark Ouellette: Heather Johnson provided some background information that during our last Planning Grant round we divided it into two phases to really

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separate the network design piece. The Lakes Region Planning grant is the first one to approach ConnectME looking for an adjust and move money from Phase II to Phase I. Brooke Johnson explained that before we decide if a project is ready for Phase II we have them present to us and the Lakes Region project was not ready to move to Phase II. We discussed with Mark Ouellette from Axiom that moving money from Phase II to Phase I might be able to get him a little more prepared and Mark Ouellette reassured us that moving money from Phase II to Phase I would not change the scope of Phase II. Dick Thompson had a concern with this approach and asked Mark Ouellette to explain his thoughts. Mark Ouellette described the project and what struggles he has encountered to warrant the money increase to Phase I. The Lakes Region project involves multiple towns unlike some of the other funded projects that only had one town. Mark Ouellette also believes that some of the towns will not be moving into Phase II and that will free up some of the money. Heather Johnson suggested we move forward with this request. Sue Woods motions to approve this request and Denise Garland seconds the motion. All were in favor.

7. Review of Financial Report: Brooke Johnson explained the February financial activity. The ConnectME Authority received \$5,161.79 in assessment money and paid \$0.00 in grant payments. The ending balance for the month of February was \$1,650,370.24
8. Approval to Open Grant Round and Set an Amount: Heather Johnson explained that the end of the Fiscal year projected balance is still \$900,000. Peggy Schaffer suggested we wait a month until we open our next grant round to give us time for outreach to communities and to figure out if any communities will be applying for the USDA money. Heather Johnson talked about the range that ConnectME will have for funding is between \$750,000 and \$900,000. Voting is tabled until the next Board meeting.
9. Approval of February 22, 2019 Minutes: Denise Garland motions to approve the minutes for February 22, 2019 and Sue Woods seconds the motion. All were in favor.
10. Director Report: Legislative Update: Peggy Schaffer and Heather Johnson discussed the Legislative actions over the last few weeks and in the coming weeks. The DECD budget piece to move ConnectME to DECD will be before the Appropriations Committee and the EUT Committee next week.
11. Other Business: Sue Woods discussed her attendance at the USDA ReConnect Workshop.
12. Public Comments: Ben Sanborn filled in the Board about his discussions with Senator Collins Office and a broadband bill that they have been working on that will be introduced soon. Nick Battista spoke to the Board about trying to come up with creative ways in the future if ConnectME receives a large sum of money and how to leverage some of that work and that we have bigger fish to fry then spending a chunk of our Board meetings discussing a few thousand dollars on Planning grants. He challenged the Board to move Broadband throughout the state at a much more accelerated rate then we have been doing.

Board meeting adjourned at 3:35 p.m.