

CONNECTME



State of Maine
ConnectME Authority
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Dick Thompson
Chair

Authority Members - Denise Garland - Susan Woods - Bruce Williamson - Sandy Saunders - Ralph Johnson

June 22, 2018

ConnectME Authority – Meeting Notes

1. Introductions: Authority Board Members: Dick Thompson, Sandy Saunders, Bruce Williamson and Denise Garland.

Authority Staff: Heather Johnson and Brooke Johnson.

Members of the Public were asked to introduce themselves.

2. NTIA: Overview of a few Community Projects- Scott Woods described his Power Point presentation titled, Planning Your Community Broadband Roadmap and Overcoming Adoption Barriers. Scott Woods explained that communities should think about their ultimate program goals and explained the six key steps to the development of a community broadband plan. Scott Woods talked about a few communities including Northern Georgia and the City of Chicago and he also described what challenges some communities and providers faced and what the communities did to overcome those challenges.
3. Planning Grant Discussion/Approval- Heather Johnson explained that at the last meeting we tabled Planning grants and that we have been working on streamlining this Planning grant process to maximize funding. Heather Johnson explained the current situation we are funding mapping. Heather Johnson is proposing a phase 1 and a phase 2 for this Planning grant round. Phase 1 is the community work, provider engagement and digital inclusion plan and phase 2 is network design. We will escrow all the money for phase 2 but applicants might not move to phase 2. Whenever applicants are done phase 1 they can come back to ConnectME and prove they are ready to move into phase 2. Bowdoinham will start in phase 2. Heather Johnson has spoken with every Planning grant applicant and they are supportive of this proposal. Sandy Saunders asked if we will have a time limit for phase 1 and Heather Johnson recommends only holding phase 2 money for 12 months. Dick Thompson motions to approve the modified version of Planning grants and Sandy Saunders seconds the motion. All Board members were in favor.
4. Broadband Community Meetings- Heather Johnson explained that we have partnered with the USDA to do community tours to discuss the Broadband Action Plan, funding mechanisms, help communities prepare and discuss how they can partner with the USDA. Heather Johnson explained that we will be doing candidate forums during the community tours. Brooke Johnson described the logistics of how she has been working with these communities on time and place and she has a full schedule of all meetings almost finalized and a sample of what an individual community invitation/agenda will look like. Brooke Johnson will provide the Board with a finalized schedule next week.

5. Approval of May 25, 2018 Minutes and Financial Report- Denise Garland makes a motion to approve the May 25, 2018 minutes, Sandy Saunders seconds the motion. All Board members were in favor. Broke Johnson explained the May financial activity. The ConnectME Authority received \$440.39 in assessment money and paid \$18,706 in grant payments. The ending balance for the month of May was \$1,382,237.97.
6. Director report- Heather Johnson explained that Macpage has started the audit process on the ConnectME Authority and that Brooke Johnson will provide the Board with updates as she receives them. Heather Johnson explained the extension request sent to ConnectME Authority from the City of Mount Desert and Brian Lippold explained that they are waiting for four more pole licenses. The new estimated time of completion is now October 31, 2018. Denise Garland makes a motion to approve the extension request from the City of Mount Desert and Dick Thompson seconds the motion. All Board members were in favor. Heather Johnson talked about LD520, the \$100 million bond bill in the legislature. Heather Johnson provides background on the bill and where we are today. Heather Johnson talks about how the bill has had a little more momentum than we had anticipated. The bill is ongoing work and we have had great feedback on this bill. We do not know where we will land but we continue to have these needed discussions. On Monday July 25, 2018 ConnectME will host a reception sponsored by TAM in the Taxation Committee Room and explain to the legislators how funding attracts funding.
7. Other business- Dick Thompson discussed cancelling a summer Board meeting. Dick Thompson motions to cancel August Board meeting and Denise Garland seconds the motion. All Board members were in favor.
8. Public comments- Ben Sanborn explained that he has been talking with Representative Berry and one of the things he is looking at is to garner support for a broadband caucus for next legislative session and Ben Sanborn believes this it is important to be a part of forming that caucus and that maybe this is what we have missing is a group of dedicated sponsors. Ben Sanborn talked about tracking return on investment for grants and how well did they work. He suggested we collect that data from previous communities so we can get actual numbers and find out what worked for them and what didn't. Brian Lippold talked about how in Franklin County that CMP might assist in solving the broadband problem and they are having discussions with them currently and it may or may not be part of their transmission line project
9. Board Meeting adjourned at 3:40 p.m.