

TOWN OF MT. DESERT BROADBAND COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

January 12, 2016 / 4pm @ Town Office

Members Present: Jeff Burnham, Lili Pew, Wendell Oppewall, Philip Koch; John Fehlauer (via phone); Matt Hart, Durlin Lunt (ex officio)

Public Present: Katrina Carter

The Meeting was called to order at 4:00pm

Approval of Minutes

- Jeff moved for approval of the Dec. 1 and Jan. 5 minutes. (Second ?)
Minutes of both meetings were approved unanimously

- Jeff inquired as to the Committee proceedings being transparent and making sure as an official committee of the Town proper procedures are followed. Durlin indicated that agendas had been made public, meeting minutes would be made public online, and the Broadband Committee would be added to the appropriate section of the website.

Review of Meeting with FairPoint

- Phil expressed that FairPoint (FP) had place more emphasis on “the meat” of the presentation and fast forwarded through portions, but was glad they have been open to conversations
- John added that FP should be pinned down on a timeline for their 2016 projects (one in Somesville and one in Bar Harbor).
- Lili suggested a single map be assembled with overlays of actual FP, Time Warner (TWC), etc. coverage areas within Mt. Desert. Ellsworth created such a map which helped truly highlight unserved/underserved outlying areas and attract GWI to those areas. Durlin suggested Kyle might be able to assist in this project.

Review of TWC Service Area Map (see attachment)

- John expressed concern over the accuracy of the TWC map, pointing out that Woods Rd. is shaded in blue, but to his knowledge TWC service is not available without committing to a four-figure installation fee. The map is not necessarily a realistic portrayal of their current service reach.

- Phil asked that the Committee follow up with TWC regarding their service map. Wendell pulled up a Google Maps file with more detail, but the issue was still not clear.

Short Term and Long Term Projects:

- Jeff stated that we have two issues to explore:
 1. Providing service to everybody (short term)
 2. Potential buildout of fiber, etc. (long term)

One issue does not necessarily need to follow the other. If a short term fix (via FP, TWC, Redzone (RZ), etc.) extending coverage areas of current services is achieved, this might be where the Committee's work ends, even if that fix only includes extending coverage with speeds that some might already consider insufficient.

- Wendell suggested the Committee be mindful that there are different ways to approach any long term fiber solutions, including leasing "dark fiber" already in place, etc.
- John requested that in addition to following up with TWC, we follow up on our original request to meet with RZ regarding their fixed LTE technology, even if only for due diligence. The group agreed, and in addition to contacting TWC (Durlin), Wendell will make a request to RZ.
- Jeff discussed the "Three Ring Binder," and whether or not we should be concerned about Tilson's relationship with Maine Fiber. This is perhaps further reason to further explore fixed LTE as an option, although it was expressed that most LTE research and growth is more focused on mobility rather than overcoming geographical challenges, etc. Phil added that fiber focuses on taking data to an end point, while cellular focuses on handing the data off to the end user. Lili shared that in Ellsworth, the relationship with Tilson has been positive.
- Wendell stated that he suspected RZ LTE would likely provide patchy coverage, and would be dependent on number of subscribers, in addition to geography, etc.

Wi-Fi Hotspot in Northeast Harbor:

- Jeff inquired if the Committee was interested in revisiting the idea of Wi-Fi hotspots. Although the idea had been considered a low priority amongst the list of goals, he felt with Acadia Corp's successful season at the Asticou, the return of the Tan Turtle, etc., such a project might have some economic benefit.

- Wendell gave a quick overview of how such a project might work with merchants providing bandwidth for a mesh network by utilizing relatively low cost equipment. There is potential to implement such a mesh network to cover the Main St. area, the Harbor, Asticou, Clifton Dock, etc.
- Lili suggested that there would be two benefits to such a project:
 1. It would be of economic benefit to the town
 2. It would show that projects can be accomplished quickly and in a cost-effective manner.
- Katrina suggested that such a project fits with what the newly formed Village Center Committee is focusing on. Matt added that the committee is holding a stakeholders meeting on Feb. 3.
- Lili moved that the Broadband Committee make a recommendation to the Village Center Committee to explore the concept of a mesh network. The motion was seconded by Phil, and the affirmative vote was unanimous.
- It was suggested later in the meeting that the Committee be mindful of the appearance that such a project focuses mainly on NE Harbor.

The Project (and Progress) in Ellsworth

- Lili summarized the fiber project in Ellsworth thus far. Ellsworth has benefited from grants, and the project was very fluid in its early stages in regards to coverage area, etc. The project got underway about three years ago, and is currently in the construction stage, but not online.
- Lili suggested that in addition to inviting Jeff from Ellsworth to one of our meetings, it would be beneficial to speak with Micki Sumpter. The benefit of coordinating with neighboring communities on long term fiber, especially Ellsworth and Bar Harbor was expressed and supported by the group. Although Tilson has indicated there are not necessarily financial gains regarding engineering and construction, the group felt that there are potential benefits to “casting a larger shadow.”

Committee Timeline

- There was some concern expressed at various points throughout the meeting as to whether addressing a short-term solution for unserved areas might impact the potential for a longer term fiber option.
- Jeff stated that he believes our community has a tremendous amount to offer, especially natural beauty, but two things that are lacking and hinder us are the deficiency of adequate economic and communication infrastructures. A fiber solution would encourage economic growth.

- Phil added that Mt. Desert is in competition with other communities in offering these services, and the focus isn't just on economic growth, but also on not falling further behind.
- In the near term, Jeff requested more information be requested from TWC and RZ regarding a short term fix at the next meeting, which was set for Tuesday, Jan 26.
- There was much discussion concerning the upcoming Town budget and any request the Committee might need to make for funding in the upcoming fiscal year. The Committee will put its full effort into gathering further information from TWC and RZ as soon as possible to go along with what has already been gained from the FP meeting. Further consultation with Tilson might be necessary as well to sift through all short term options. Depending on how this time sensitive process goes, an appropriate and corresponding request will be made of the Board of Selectmen to be included in the proposed FY2017 budget.

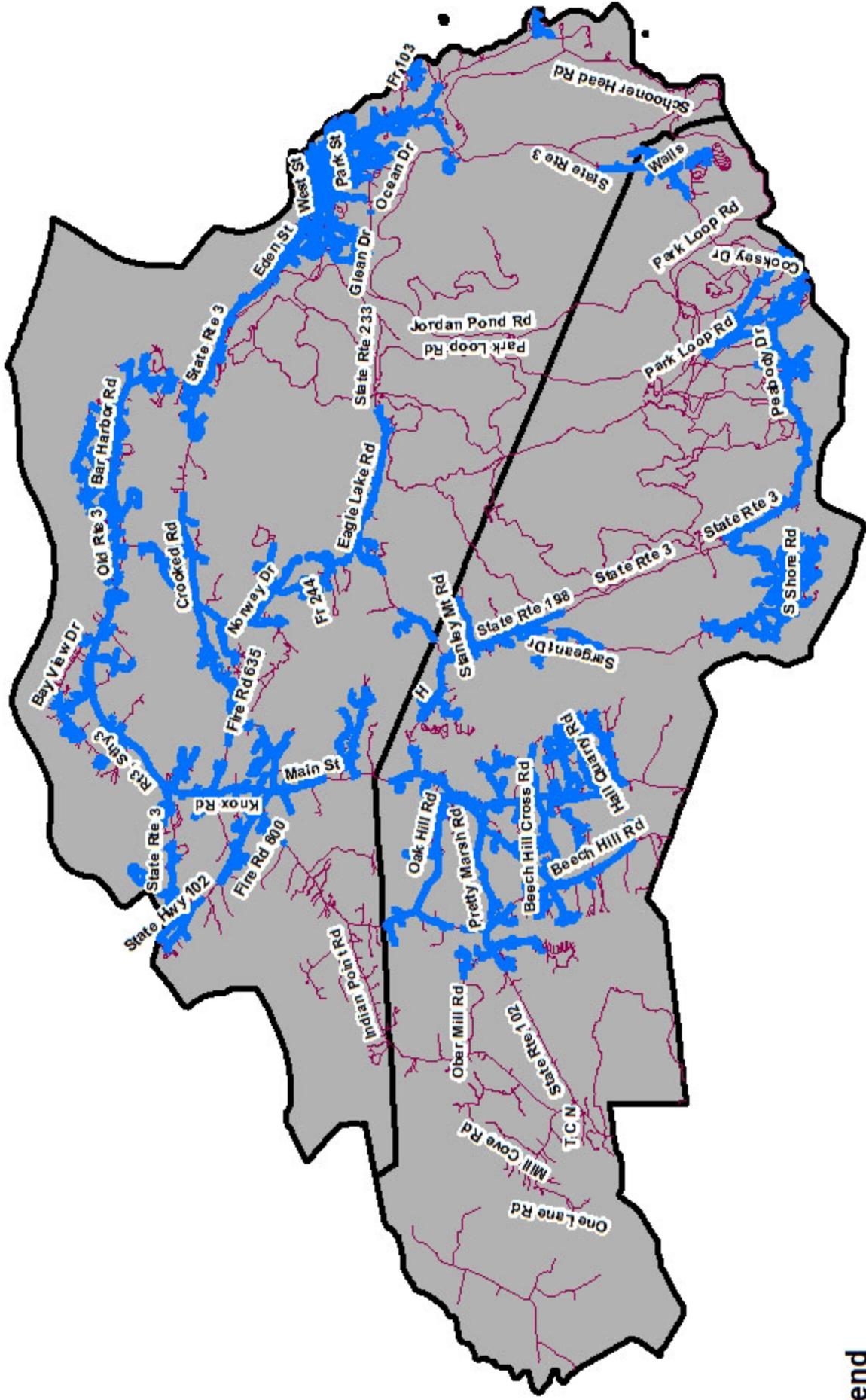
The meeting was adjourned at 5:30pm. The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, January 26th at 4pm in the conference room at the Town Office.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Matthew Hart". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Matthew Hart

TWC TOWN OF BAR HARBOR & MOUNT DESERT, ME SERVED STREETS



Legend

-  TWC Served Streets
-  Streets
-  Municipal Boundary