

Town of Mt. Desert
Broadband Committee Meeting Minutes
June 9, 2021 @ 4:00 pm via Zoom

Members Present: Pete Cuffari, Kathy Miller, Scott McFarland; Kendra Jo (Island Institute guest).

1. Approval of Minutes

A motion was made and seconded (Miller/McFarland) to approve the minutes as presented for the May 13, 2021 meeting. The vote was unanimous for approval.

2. Update from BOS meeting June 7

Kathy reported the Board of Selectmen approved moving forward with the VETRO auto-design plan and approved moving ahead with the public meetings. She also reported that at the League of Town meetings, both Bar Harbor and Tremont expressed interest in working together for a more regional approach to developing broadband.

3. VETRO Cares for ME Auto-design

VETRO had provided some parameters for their auto-design effort. The one comment to come from committee members in advance was about the length of the drop to a premise, and whether their default would be long enough to reach down all roads or driveways. There was a question about the quality of the data VETRO relies upon. They noted that to a degree they rely on provider-furnished information. If the Town has any better data, we should provide it directly. After the BOS meeting, we are prepared to give VETRO the green light to go ahead with the design. There was some discussion about possible costs, and how other town handle the last mile. It was suggested that \$40,000/mile is a common cost estimate, and that some town require that up to 500 Ft of length to a premise be included for free, but that beyond that there may be a charge of \$150/foot.

4. Community Engagement Events

There was some discussion about who should host the public events, and there was agreement we should ask the Town Manager or IT person Kyle Avila about using the Town zoom platform. There was some discussion about having an emcee for the public events, and whether there should be a scrip to follow. Kendra Jo offered to facilitate the meetings with the providers (Spectrum and Consolidated Comm.). There was a suggestion that at those meetings, questions should be submitted in the chat box, rather than having an open mic format. Kathy offered to emcee the other meetings if needed, but it could be another committee member or Town staff.

There was some discussion about the schedule of these public meetings, noting summer is so busy for year-round residents. There was a question about the Summer Resident Association meetings this year, and Kathy will check with them about plans. There was a suggestion about scheduling one public meeting to gauge participation, and then determine if it should be more

frequent. It was suggested that weekday evenings would be the best time to hold meetings. It was suggested that some marking of the meetings via the Town email lists, Facebook notices, the Town website, etc. would all be appropriate.

5. Survey

There was a discussion of some of the sample survey from other towns that Kendra Jo had provided. There were some themes to consider: concern over business growth, interest in a municipal service, amount people would be willing to pay for service, interest in training. There was a question about what we will do with the answers once the surveys are all collected, and agreement that the data should all be collated. There was a question about any survey tools that might be available from VETRO, and if any info from a survey would be helpful to them. Further discussion covered the logistics of doing a speed test as part of the survey, interest in the age of users, or how they were using services, and questions about spending more time here if there were better broadband service.

There was a discussion on options for expansion, having incumbent providers expand their network, creating a partnership to expand with the Town and a provider creating a partnership and negotiating how to finance an expansion. One other option is for the Town to own the infrastructure and bring in a service provider.

After some further discussion about the survey, it was agreed to have a special meeting focused exclusively on drafting the survey in time to mail out with the tax bills through the Town office. That meeting was set for June 17 at 7:00 pm

Next Steps

- Kathy will get more information from VETRO about hosting the survey.
- Kathy will get more information about the SRA meetings.
- Special meeting June 17 to finalize the survey questions.

Future Meetings

The next meeting will be Thursday, July 8, 2021 @ 4 pm via Zoom.

Respectfully submitted,



Kathleen W. Miller