

**Town of Mt. Desert**  
**Broadband Committee Meeting Minutes**  
**July 8, 2021 @ 4:00 pm via Zoom**

**Members Present:** Pete Cuffari, Kathy Miller, Scott McFarland; Kendra Jo (Island Institute guest), Frank Baltzell (member of the public).

**1. Approval of Minutes**

A motion was made and seconded (Cuffari/Miller) to approve the minutes as presented for the June 9, 2021 meeting. The vote was unanimous for approval.

**2. Update re: Surveys**

Kathy reported the surveys had gone out with the tax bills. We are waiting on VETRO to finalize the online version to link to the Town website. In the meantime, we will put in a placeholder Google form. Frank Baltzell remarked he thought the survey was good, it was good to ask about speed, etc., and that the data will be helpful to present in the future.

**3. VETRO Cares for ME Auto-design**

Kathy explained the details of the auto-design. There were some questions on the 3-Ring Binder, a review of the map and cost estimates. It was noted that Spectrum doesn't share detailed info about their network, but use a hybrid of fiber and coaxial cable usually.

Kendra Jo reported that Southport Island just had a meeting with Spectrum, and it now seems Spectrum is open to working with towns to expand fiber, but with limits on the town's ownership. With a rule of thumb construction cost of \$30,000/mile, the cost for the buildout per the VETRO design would be \$6 million, if municipally owned. Working with Spectrum would be less expensive, but would also offer more limited options.

There was a question about whether the VETRO design is an all home-run plan. No answer available at the time.

There was a discussion about the responses from the League of Towns. To date, Bar Harbor, Tremont, and Trenton have expressed interest. Southwest Harbor has not expressed interest. There was a suggestion made to inquire into Hinckley's interest, which may provide some persuasion for the town of SWH. [Note: Ellsworth committee members have also reached out with interest, after this meeting date.]

**4. Community Engagement Events**

The proposed schedule of public meetings was presented. Scott offered to host or co-host when available. Kyle Avila might not always be available to attend as the IT person. Kendra Jo offered to provide backup if needed. Durlin noted he would not be available at the August 10 meeting.

For the future meeting with other communities, it was suggested that a plan be created to display the range of options other communities have pursued, such as working with the incumbent, transitioning from an incumbent to a municipal network. Some of the other communities suggested were St. George, Southport, and Downeast Broadband.

## **5. ConnectMe Authority Update**

Kathy provided some information from the recent ConnectME Authority meeting. They have created a map of services across the state, and she will share the link to it with the committee. It was noted that it is difficult to get data from providers about their network, services, or customers, but they are subject to FOI rules. There was a discussion about who owns the poles along the road, which would need attachments for any new cables and is a significant part of the construction costs. Most poles are owned by the electric company. The ConnectME Authority will be moving ahead with a “connectivity corps,” providing knowledgeable individuals to help communities develop plans. There are still details to be determined, there may be some funding available, but also an expectation that individual towns will cover some of the cost. There was some info on grant availability, with deadlines for some sources, and rolling timelines for others.

### **Next Steps**

- Kathy will provide a link to the ConnectME map.
- Next Public Meeting August 10 @ 5:30pm

### **Future Meetings**

The next committee meeting will be Thursday, August 12, 2021 @ 4 pm via Zoom.

Respectfully submitted,



Kathleen W. Miller