April 29, 2021

To: Broadband Committee

Fr: Engagement Subcommittee – Scott McFarland, Kathy Miller, Pete Cuffari

Re: **BROADBAND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PLAN 2021**

As our Committee considers if, when, and how to expand broadband in the Town of Mount Desert, we must engage the community to drive any plans. The best advice is to plan or build _with_ the community, not _for_ the community, to articulate needs and to prepare for any changes or grant funding. To that end, and with guidance from Kendra Jo Grindle of the Island Institute, we would propose holding a series of public sessions online as a means of putting information out to the public, bringing information and stories back to our committee and Town decision-makers, and bringing the public along in a transparent process towards change and development that should also include non-virtual interaction, such as paper surveys, to engage any in the community not already connected online.

For public events we would propose the following, with dates TBD, but roughly 2 per month:

1. **Kickoff Meeting**
   - Define "broadband" and how it's used, or value in the future
   - Tell what has been done so far regarding broadband expansion
     - Spectrum to Pretty Marsh
     - School systems and hot spots for COVID coverage
     - Police Department connections to BH via fiber
   - Introduce a Town Broadband Website as a site for gathering and sharing info
   - Introduce upcoming community survey – online _and_ paper
   - Start collecting stories of needs, uses, possibilities
   - Point out efforts by other communities, the variety of ways to expand services
   - Introduce future funding possibilities from state or federal sources
   - Introduce FTTH/P planning efforts through VETRO Cares for Me program
   - Plans for future public events

2. **Conversation with Island Institute-ME Broadband Coalition-ConnectME Authority**
   - Importance to community values – economic, education, health, social
   - Learn about various technology options, and state's position on growth
   - Learn about funding options and other resources for expansion
     - New proposal for Maine Connectivity Authority
     - Requirements to be eligible for grant funding

3. **Conversation with National Digital Equity Center**
   - Learn what digital equity is
   - Learn how a community can ensure digital equity for its residents

4. **Conversation with Incumbent Provider - Spectrum**
   - Ask about where their services are currently – coaxial cable vs fiber optic
   - Ask about what their plans are for any expansion, geographically or to fiber optic
   - Ask about anticipated costs for services in the future

5. **Conversation with Incumbent Provider - Consolidated Communications**
   - Same questions as for Spectrum

6. **Conversation with the League of Towns**
   - Explore options for expansion in conjunction with other communities

7. **Conversations with Other Communities to tell of their process of expansion**
   - Communities that worked with incumbents for expansion
   - Communities that created their own public-private entity

8. **Update from Broadband Committee**
   - Survey Results
   - FTTH/P design and cost implications
   - Proposed options for expansion
     - Timeline
     - Business/Financial Model