

**Town of Mt. Desert**  
**Broadband Committee Meeting Minutes**  
**October 13, 2022 @ 4:00 pm via Zoom**

**Members Present:**, Scott McFarland, Kathy Miller, Lili Pew, Pete Cuffari, Durlin Lunt (ex officio)

**Also Present:** Brian Lippold, Casco Bay Advisors, Melinda Kinney and Shelly from Spectrum, Elaine Eaton, Tremont Broadband Committee

**1. Approval of Minutes**

The minutes from the August 11, 2022 meeting were moved for approval, seconded, and unanimously VOTED for approval.

**2. Discussion with Casco Bay Advisors re: communication with providers**

Brian Lippold of Casco Bay Advisors introduced Melinda Kinney from Spectrum, who presented their findings and proposal for filling gaps in services.

- They currently cover 2,160 homes/businesses – over 100 more than last year
- There are 44 homes not covered by Spectrum services
- The cost to provide access to those remaining home would be \$324,564
- They would offer \$110,000 towards that cost
- ME Connectivity Authority may be funding some line extension programs, or ARPA funds may be available for this
- The minimum residential service available today is 300/10 mbps
- Customers can get up to Gig/35 mbps
- They are working towards much faster services, and hope in 3-4 years to offer gig symmetrical services
- They would define a serviceable location as within 250-300 feet from existing lines, without additional equipment, costs, etc.
- They based their estimates on services on Casco Bay's report on the Town
- Spectrum does offer some low-income programs @ \$19.90/month

There was a discussion on a range of topics:

- Would the level of services they could offer now meet the definition of “broadband” and be eligible for grant funding?
  - It depends on who is defining – Maine Connectivity Authority and FCC have different definitions of un- or under-served. By Maine standards, this would be considered “underserved” level of service.
- Would this be considered “high quality” connections?
  - Melinda Kinney stated that upload speeds of 10 are good for a family of 5, and that ARPA funds are in the works for Spectrum. She noted that they have a fiber backbone on MDI.
- Upgrades on speeds could mean increased charges, but network upgrades would not mean higher charges
- Questions about future plans and roll-outs of upgrades – anything Spectrum can share?

- Not really, other than what has been published in the news. They will be coming out with announcements about changes for the whole country, and we'd be part of that. But it could be next year, sharing with Wall Street, etc.
- Question: when they do the upgrades, will that be available to everyone, or will that be more of a specialty, higher priced service?
  - New quality, higher speeds, but tiers stay at the same price, so a speed increase does not necessarily mean a price increase.
- The timing for new connections would be 12-18 months after go-ahead approvals, which includes the make-ready process for poles.
- Are there ARPA funds the Town could use?
  - Durlin noted there are approximately \$100K funds in hand that may be able to use them with BOS approval rather than waiting for a Town-wide vote – but he will check on that estimate. Also, Hancock County may also have ARPA funds available. Melinda said if we are close to funds in hand, but not enough, we should go back to Spectrum to reconsider their contribution. Also, Shelly suggested that if we have the commitment from Hancock County, but not all the funds in hand, we could still work with them to get the process underway, with commitments to pay later.
- Follow up with Brian Lippold/Casco Bay Advisors:
  - We should be clear on their definition of “serviceable” locations, so there will still be locations beyond 250 ft from the road will be responsible for additional charges to connect – which could be quite high down a long driveway, etc. So, we should be clear on what we want. They might create a per/foot price, not sure about reality of any discounts on that rate.
  - What Spectrum is offering is 100% cable service across town, with the promise of upgrades in services over the next four years – which is not a bad deal. But we also have to recognize that a lot of cable subscribers are not satisfied with their service. So, again, we should be clear on what we want.
  - We should wait to see what Consolidated will offer, and also see what they are doing in Bar Harbor soon.
  - Questions about any towns that help subsidize individual resident costs down long driveways, etc. Yes, the Town could allocate their own funds, but there may be restrictions on state funds, or local resistance to solve all individual situations of long driveways.
- Next steps: hear from Consolidated; get specific info on residences still to be connected to Spectrum, and distance from roads; check with Hancock County on available funds and any restrictions on funding coax/cable installations. Noted that getting to 100% cable coverage doesn't exclude moving ahead with fiber optic via Consolidated, which could be a faster moving process since they don't have the same make-ready issues. But it could still be 2024 before either company could install. Brian noted that right now, Consolidated would still put in DSL for new services in this town. We need to become part of their plans for expanding fiber across the state.
- We can look at our VETRO instance to see the specific address currently unserved, which includes the Casco Bay review data. Casco Bay provided Spectrum with their data, which Spectrum then used to do their own review, finding that some are in process, others

have access but don't connect, etc. If we go ahead with Spectrum we would want to ensure that it's universal – 100% - coverage.

**3. Discussion with Tremont Town Manager re: collaboration**

Kathy noted that the Tremont Town Manager, Jesse Dunbar, was unable to attend again, but their Town has created its own Broadband Committee. We will keep this item on the agenda for a future meeting.

Elaine Eaton from the Tremont Broadband Committee did attend. Brian explained that this would be the same process Tremont would go through should they sign on to the similar proposal from Casco Bay Advisors. Elaine wonders how the Town of Tremont might compare with Mount Desert in terms of existing coverage and residential proximity to main roads. Elaine noted that, while she hasn't gotten information from the Town Manager, the committee as a whole is favorable about working with Mount Desert. Scott noted it really is a question of timing, since they are just now getting started. Elaine noted they wanted to jump start and get right on the work of doing the review by Casco Bay. They will also look into town and county ARPA funds, speaking with Jesse Dunbar and Mission Broadband. Kathy recommended that if the two towns are to work together, it would focus on fiber optic rather than coax/cable. Elaine agreed.

**4. Other such business as may properly come before this meeting**

Congratulations to Durlin on his recognition as Town Manager of the Year!

**5. Next Meeting – 2<sup>nd</sup> Thursday of each month**

The next regular committee meeting would be Thursday, November 10, 2022 @ 4 pm via Zoom. However, we will set it when we can be certain the Consolidated Communications can join us and make a presentation.

The meeting adjourned at 5:12 pm.

Respectfully submitted,



Kathleen W. Miller