

**Town of Mt. Desert**  
**Broadband Committee Meeting Minutes**  
**December 15, 2022 @ 4:00 pm via Zoom**

**Members Present:** Scott McFarland, Kathy Miller, Wendell Oppewall, Pete Cuffari, Frank Baltzell, Durlin Lunt (ex officio)

**Also Present:** Brian Lippold (Casco Bay Advisors), Sarah Davis (Consolidated Communications), Michele Marks (Tremont Broadband Committee)

**1. Approval of Minutes**

The minutes from the October 13, 2022 meeting were moved for approval, seconded, and unanimously VOTED for approval.

**2. Presentation by Consolidated Communications, Inc. regarding their proposal to the Town**

Brian Lippold of Casco Bay Advisors introduced Sarah Davis from Consolidated Communications, who said she had no formal presentation. When asked she stated:

- They currently have no plans for MDI for 2023
- They have plans for Bar Harbor in 2024, details to be determined
- CCI makes plans annually in September for the following year, using high level vetting to determine their plans
- They are now developing elsewhere, depending on capital. In more urban areas using their own money, or via partnerships with others using grant funds, etc. They usually get a higher take rate via partnerships.
- They do look at preorders to determine interest in an area, with individuals signing up on their website. Towns could also deliver a bulk list of interested takers.
- Theoretically they want to get to 400K locations in Maine.
- Buildout depends on the possible numbers of subscribers (take rate) so they are not too concerned about competition from cable companies in the same area.
- The core is built to Ellsworth. They will do more in Q1 of 2023.
- They are active on the Blue Hill peninsula through a partnership arrangement with many towns there, with funding primarily through the federal government. They are currently working through some permitting issues and then expect a three-month buildout for universal FTTP, lashing over existing copper lines, or underground via conduits.
- They usually allow 150' from pole/conduit to a building. Beyond that they may charge the customer \$2/foot.
- Maine is Consolidated's largest market. Fidium Fiber is their new name for their fiber optic offering.
- They are offering 1Gig speed for \$70/month – the most popular option. They also offer 50mbps for \$35/month or 250 mbps for \$65/month. It's generally a free installation, and all symmetrical speeds. They can do a mesh home network for full home/whole home coverage.
- How can the Town entice Consolidated to partner with us? Via engaged committees, via grant funding path, bringing multiple towns together.
- Consolidated would not provide service over fiber they don't own – e.g., a town-owned network. If we had the funds to build it, better to partner with CCI to build/operate.

- Regarding flexibility of pricing, they offer 50/10 service for free to those income-eligible.
- If we did enter into a partnership they would provide a visual plan, and the Town could augment their plans to ensure universal coverage.
- They would project a \$4.6 million cost for build out, with 6 months planning and 3 months building. 2024 would be the best case scenario.
- For comparison, the Blue Hill project will be an \$11-13 million project, mostly federal funds as part of a bigger state-wide grant through ConnectME Authority.
- Southwest Harbor may be in contact recently with Consolidated about services.

### **3. Follow up discussion with Casco Bay Advisors regarding the CCI proposal & next steps**

Brian Lippold told the committee he had thought Consolidated was going to provide a real proposal, but believes that the \$4.6 million estimate is a real number to consider. He noted that Consolidated is getting many requests, so they are juggling a lot right now. He recommended we keep talking to them. As for funding, it is hard to say if MD would be a low priority since we have strong cable coverage. The next federal program – BEAD – is intended for non-cabled areas, so not likely for our town. If we were to enter a partnership with Consolidated, they would do the grant and compliance work. Brian will follow up with Sarah Davis.

Tremont noted they are looking for universal coverage. They are gathering in early January to review their data being gathered by Casco Bay Advisors. Brian is also doing a study for Bar Harbor, which doesn't have a real committee.

There was a discussion about getting SWH engaged to avoid duplication and stress the necessity of fiber optic. There was a suggestion to go back to the league of Towns for this topic to bring more communities into the planning.

Wendell offered to reach out to the SWH Town Manager; Kathy will contact SWH select persons Jim Vallette and Tasha Johnson. There was a suggestion that a committee for the whole island might be better than individual committees, or both individual towns and a group – similar to the school committee structures.

Durlin reported that he had asked the County about funding for coax/cable Spectrum coverage, and they do have funds that could be available.

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

No other business

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

The next regular committee meeting would be Thursday, January 12, 2023 @ 4 pm via Zoom.

Respectfully submitted,



Kathleen W. Miller  
Secretary