

Town of Mt. Desert
Broadband Committee Meeting Minutes
February 10, 2022 @ 4:00 pm via Zoom

Members Present: Frank Baltzell, Pete Cuffari, John Fehlauer, Kathy Miller, Lili Pew, Wendell Oppewall, Matt Hart (ex officio)

Guests Present: Brian Lippold (Casco Bay Advisors), Emily Roscoe (Island Institute)

2. Update re: Casco Bay data collection

Brian Lippold reported they have completed the field audit and mapping all over Town. They need to complete some quality control of the data, create some cost estimates based on that data, and write the report for the Town. They will provide a map that will show that 95-99% of potential subscribers are covered with access to cable. There are just a few pockets that do not have access to cable. So, the primary questions will be: what would it take to do a fiber-to-the-home or a cable connection to 100% of the Town?

Mr. Lippold reports that cable provider Spectrum's recent responses to RFPs for service in other communities has been erratic. He recommends the Town check on any existing status of a Franchise Agreement with Spectrum. He said it was worth having a discussion with both incumbents. Consolidated may be open to a buildout.

Mr. Lippold said the Report will be done by the end of March, and he will move the GIS data to VETRO platform, which we can have in our own instance there. In response to a question about the status of the connection to Bar Harbor fiber, he said a Warrant Article will be voted on there in May for approval on construction. He also noted that his firm does grant writing for broadband services.

1. Approval of Minutes

The minutes from the February meeting were moved for approval, seconded, and unanimously VOTED for approval.

3. Discussion of Next Steps

There was a question on having some sort of presentation at the Town Meeting – having some info on display, some data, etc. Frank reported he was looking to the cell tower on Route 3 coming into NEH and wondered if it was connected to fiber. Yes, it is, provided by Consolidated. There will be a new tower going up in SWH. There was a discussion about the speed test data, and how to respond to speed lags, with a suggestion that newer equipment in people's homes might help with that. There was a question about defining "universal connectivity" meaning with either fiber or cable. To determine the path forward, we will need to create options with related costs for residents to consider.

It was agreed we will need to digest the information in the forthcoming report from Casco Bay and be prepared to present it. There were questions about speed, settling for 100/100 mbps. It was noted this is the state definition of broadband, and a good goal, but cable service from

Spectrum isn't usually symmetrical, with lower upload speeds, which are important for sending out large files to someone else, or backup to clouds, etc. Businesses often need good upload speeds. Are there possibilities with cable to bring it closer to symmetry, new equipment or new firmware solutions? It was noted that Spectrum offers 1 G symmetrical connection for about \$800/month – far too expensive for most users. Should our goal before 1G symmetrical FTTP? To determine we should look at demographics and possible uses – upload or download most important? What do people need for home, work, or school? What will be needed in the future. Since state and federal funds are coming along, we should be reaching out to take advantage.

We will need to explain options available and funding opportunities with grants.

We will look at other town models for connecting, such as the Vinal Haven model. We should consider sending out information to all residents, perhaps with the annual tax bills in July.

4. Other Business

None

5. Future Meetings

The next committee meeting will be Thursday, April 14 @ 4 pm via Zoom.

The meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,



Kathleen W. Miller