

**Town of Mt. Desert**  
**Broadband Committee Meeting Minutes**  
**April 13, 2023 @ 4:00 pm via Zoom**

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

**Excused:** Scott McFarland, Lili Pew

**Also Present:** Brian Lippold (Casco Bay Advisors, consultant), Genevieve Bristol and Christa Thorpe (Island Institute), Elaine Eaton, Jordan Wolfe, and Siobhan Ryan (Tremont Broadband Committee), Brandon Bies, Keith Johnston, and Kevin Langley (Acadia National Park)

Kathy Miller chaired the meeting in the absence of Chair McFarland.

**1. Approval of Minutes**

Lacking a quorum, minutes for the March 9, 2023 were not approved.

**2. Update from Durlin Lunt re: Spectrum 100% coverage cost/proposal**

Durlin Lunt reported the effort of closing gap of last 38 properties not currently covered by Spectrum is underway. He invited ANP to this meeting because some of those properties are within park boundaries. The total cost to the Town is about \$150,000, but the Town now has just \$125,000 available, with the balance needed for the project with Bar Harbor already underway. Durlin said there may be a few options to close that finance gap: Hancock County ARPA funds, ANP funds if they are interested in providing service to their locations.

Brandon said the majority of the address provided needing connections were connected to the Jordan Pond House and Wild Wood Stables, plus some sites related to Blackwoods Campground – no park residential addresses. They would like to work with us to get access to those sites. ANP would like to know how far this effort would go – to park boundaries or to specific sites. Brian Lippold said he believes it would mean taking service to the specific sites, but that should be confirmed by Spectrum. Wendell said he believes the minimum service Spectrum would provide would be 500 MBPS download speeds, with higher speeds available for higher rates. The question would be is it fiber or coax, and will it be eventually available for symmetrical speeds?

Kathy noted that this committee's effort is to provide universal coverage to all structures to provide for future use even if not needed now. Brandon noted that was the park's objective as well, for both residential properties and others. They may have some funding sources available but will need to work out the logistics of how the money is actually transferred – whether to the Town, or to Spectrum. Keith noted that all poles on park land are actually owned by ANP, as are the power lines, though communication lines are owned by the providers. He also noted ANP couldn't figure all the locations noted on the map provided.

Brian suggested he could supply GIS data on the unknown locations, and he offered to provide that info in the form they needed. ANP will let us/him know which locations are unknown. Regarding funding, it should not take an act of Congress, but ANP needs to figure out what kind of agreements will be needed, and with whom. Wendell noted Spectrum already has some

government contracts, and they could likely engage on the option of providing free public WIFI in some locations, which is of interest to ANP. Brandon said it would be helpful to confirm that service will actually be to the specific sites, and then to know what percentage of the lines will be running over park land to inform the cost implications.

Brian recommended the next steps would be to communicate with Spectrum about any potential issues of connecting to ANP sites, on park land and park owned poles, though he didn't think it would be a problem. He will share data with ANP on site locations, along with data on Bar Harbor and Tremont to include the lighthouse, which is considered served by Spectrum with service along that road. Brandon asked if needed, would the Town be amenable to receive funds from ANP to pay their portion of the expense to Spectrum, and Durlin replied yes. Elaine Eaton suggested that if Mount Desert could make such an arrangement with ANP, she believed Tremont could do the same. Kevin Langley asked if there were any caveats to the arrangement with Spectrum, such as number of addresses along the road, or number of service subscriptions for a minimum period of time. Wendell responded that with the Town's expansion of Spectrum into Pretty Marsh, there were no such requirements, but if a location extended beyond their usual service length, or needed an underground conduit, etc., those additional costs were borne by the individual, not the Town or Spectrum.

ANP was invited to join us again at the next meeting, May 11, to move this forward. Brandon believed they should have some info and answers soon, and they may have the funds available, but need to work out logistics of legal ways to transfer funds. They thanked the committee for including them in their process and meeting.

### **3. Update from Casco Bay re: Consolidated Communications proposal**

Brian said he'd had multiple conversations with CCI about the numbers for coverage island-wide, though they haven't shared that with him yet. At his request, they're working on breaking it down by town, but it's complicated by lack of interest by SWH. They currently don't have numbers to share, which is disappointing. Kathy noted it might be an incentive to engage SWH. Wendell has not been able to connect with SWH Town Manager in person, and they haven't responded to his email yet. Durlin suggested the League of Towns (LOT) meeting might be an opportunity to engage, with both Durlin and Tremont Town Manager present. Wendell thinks they may feel there is almost full coverage by Spectrum, so not as much interest in engaging. Elaine noted that Tremont had thought they too had good coverage, until the work done by Casco Bay showed the existing gaps. Durlin thought it would be a good idea for someone from this committee to attend the LOT meeting, and he provided the date and said he would add it to the agenda. Kathy offered to attend that meeting. Brian said he had not pushed for the overall cost figure island-wide, since each town would want to know their own portion. He also noted that the CCI infrastructure is sitting in SWH, which also complicates things. He noted that CCI is reorganizing and restructuring in some ways, which may be part of the delay. He did not believe they are looking for more underserved communities for expansion, with less competition, but are focused on the most densely populated areas. They are more interested in Portland, Bangor, Boston, etc. as their corporate approach. They will build in less dense areas if there is a subsidy. But their strategies seem to change every 90 days.

#### **4. Consider offer from Tremont re: collaboration and discussion with Island Institute**

Genevieve said Island Institute (II) had sent survey info to Tremont and they are interested in how we all may collaborate. She apologized that Christa Thorpe had to leave, since she had more information to share. Island Institute is also working on Digital Equity issues in the state, which is Genevieve's area of work. Elaine noted that II has been working with Tremont on survey work in the community, which they had not done before. II has some grants to help with the process, the survey, etc. They could also help develop RFPs for services. Jordan said they were applying for an II grant to do the survey, and they'll use those funds to reach out to all residents to learn more about their access and experience with current services. They are also working with the Select Board to see about any negotiations with CCI or Spectrum to see how they could get universal coverage, and the Select Board has approved working with Casco Bay to pursue that. Elaine asked if II grants might be available for the next steps with both Tremont and Mount Desert. Kathy noted the work our Town had done on surveys – both paper and digital surveys – and working with Vetro FiberMap and Google docs to gather info and locate service points. The digital surveys also connected respondents to do a speed test on their service. Our survey was looking for both qualitative and quantitative information. II said their grants could help with all of that. Elaine asked about a meeting between Tremont-Mount Desert-Island Institute. The next meeting would be May 11. Tremont hopes to have their survey out by their Town Meeting on May 5. Brian is continuing to converse with Tremont Town Manager, and he includes Tremont in his conversations with both CCI and Spectrum.

#### **5. Discussion on next steps**

Island Institute to connect with Tremont and Mount Desert.

Brian Lippold will continue to reach out to CCI for town costs, and Spectrum about the ANP details and cost breakdowns for specific locations.

See if ANP is interested in the Lighthouse getting access, about 1,600 ft from existing service. Consider inviting BH to our meetings, since Casco Bay has done the same "drive by" and has been engaged to connect with CCI and Spectrum, as he is for Mount Desert. Bring it up at the League of Towns. Steve Cornell is the lead person, and Durlin will invite him to that meeting.

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

Service in Seal Harbor to reach Jordan Pond House may be of interest to reach the Mount Desert Water District property, which currently has only DSL service there now. Frank noted that in the past month Hadlock Pond Road has gotten Spectrum service to his home, and the route to the Water District property further down the road.

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

The next regular committee meeting would be Thursday, May 11, 2023 @ 4 pm via Zoom.

Respectfully submitted,



Kathleen W. Miller  
Secretary