

Town of Mt. Desert
Broadband Committee Meeting Minutes
May 11, 2023 @ 4:00 pm via Zoom

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

Excused: Frank Baltzell

Also Present: Genevieve Bristol (Island Institute), Keith Johnston, and Kevin Langley (Acadia National Park)

1. Approval of Minutes

Lacking a quorum who had attended the last meeting, minutes for April 13, 2023 were not approved.

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

Durlin reported the Town has a good portion of the funds needed, but wants to see if ANP wants to engage for their properties. Kevin Langley said he doesn't know about the GIS details, whether ANP shared GIS data with Casco Bay to determine the unknown locations. That info would be basic to determining the cost sharing arrangements. Also, they still don't know for certain about the financial mechanism for paying their share, but a proposal from ANP is being reviewed by a solicitor and they should know in a couple of weeks, or by the next meeting. Durlin agreed it could work out quickly once all the pieces were in place, with approval by the BOS. ANP is not quite sure on the needed approval time on their part. There are still some calculations to be done on the specific locations to determine the cost splits once the actual locations are known. But there was agreement to keep moving ahead as needed, and hopefully some specific progress by the June 8 meeting.

The ANP representatives left the meeting at 4:14.

3. Update from Casco Bay re: Consolidated Communications proposal

Brian Lippold of Casco Bay was not in attendance, but he had sent an email earlier with updates. He had been in touch with both Spectrum – who believes the ball is in the Town court now, when we are ready to enter into a contract – and with Consolidated, following up their earlier correspondence, noting that due to their recent reorganization with Fidium Fiber, Consolidated is currently unable to advise the four MDI towns on how much of a subsidy would be needed by each community to deploy Fidium service universally. Brian further urged her to advocate on our behalf internally to get this information.

There was a discussion on Consolidated's interest in such an installation on MDI, with lower density than places like Portland, Bangor, etc. It was noted that the company's strategic plans seem to change frequently, but currently there is a general lack of interest.

4. Update from Kathy re: League of Town / SWH approach

The SWH BOS does not seem too concerned over broadband issues, not necessarily interested in investing in fiber. Kathy reported she had attended the League of Towns meeting to give

them an update, and the SWH Town Manager said they don't get calls from people presenting broadband as an issue, so no forward movement on engaging SWH.

5. Discussion on next steps

June meeting hope to get answers from ANP, with input from Brian Lippold, to help determine cost breakdown.

Pete wonders if we should create some system for people to alert the Town or this committee if/when they don't have Spectrum service. Perhaps some inclusion in the annual letter, for instance, to let people know they should have it, so let us know if they don't – all in keeping with the goal of this committee for universal coverage. Durlin noted that Spectrum usually is pretty responsive to the town, and customers when called on it. Kathy noted the possibility of new homes going up, and wanting to make sure they will have access to service – perhaps through the permitting or approval process. Pete also suggested that it might be time to look at other objectives of the committee, such as equitable access, and eventually fiber. Digital literacy is another topic to consider in the long run, since all activities – including simply paying bills – are going digital. Genevieve from Island Institute talked about the Island Institutes' activities, and will send along the Digital Equity Plan to this committee. She noted that the Maine Connectivity Authority and the National Digital Equity Center also have resources. The Island Institute themselves are making some transition in their own focus, from helping communities plan for infrastructure development to more digital equity programming. There was a brief discussion about StarLink for some sites, for a cost. Scott noted that they see fiber installations all over, and believe it will eventually get here as well, and that we should be in a good position with the other towns on MDI to be ready when that day comes, perhaps through the libraries of each town. They already have fiber, connections to local community members, and they network together already.

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

A motion was made to approve the March 9, 2023 minutes, amended to include Lili Pew in attendance. Motion was seconded, and approved unanimously.

7. Next Meeting – 2nd Thursday of each month

The next regular committee meeting would be Thursday, June 8, 2023 @ 4 pm via Zoom.

Respectfully submitted,



Kathleen W. Miller
Secretary