

**Town of Mt. Desert**  
**Broadband Committee Meeting Minutes**  
**September 9, 2021 @ 4:00 pm via Zoom**

**Members Present:** Pete Cuffari, Kathy Miller, Scott McFarland, John Fehlauer; Matt Hart, Durlin Lunt and Bob Bickmore (ex officio); Kendra Jo Grindle (Island Institute).

**1. Approval of Minutes**

A motion was made and seconded (Cuffari/Miller) to approve the minutes as presented for the August 12, 2021 meeting. The vote was unanimous for approval.

**2. Welcome Frank Baltzell to the committee**

Kathy noted Frank Baltzell has been appointed by the BOS to join the committee. She will reach out to him and include him in all future correspondence.

**3. Update re: Surveys**

There was a discussion about the surveys received to date. The Google doc version has 114 responses, the VETRO platform version has 156. There are slight differences between the two formats. The VETRO version links directly to a map, allowing for an easy visual of where services are located. The Google doc version offers easy chart visuals for analysis. Peter Cuffari offered to combine the two into one excel format to provide easier analysis. Kathy reported that VETRO is looking into options to bring the Google doc responses into their platform without having to enter all 114 of them by hand.

There was just report of anyone having fiber optic cable as their current service. There was agreement that we should follow up with that resident to confirm and/or learn more.

There was a recommendation to look carefully at the narrative/open comments made, and to keep them for reference – suggesting much can be learned from them as opposed to responses to our questions.

**5. Community Engagement Events**

There was a discussion about the public meetings, and a general question about how to attract more people to attend them – a different day, time, or marketing effort? There was a question about whether it was apathy that kept people from attending, or whether holding sessions in person would change things (the meetings to date were hybrid in-person/online). It was noted that even without large attendance, there was value to the process and we're still learning. Scott noted that after the most recent meeting, he has been convinced that fiber optic cable is the only real way to go to meet the goals of being future proof and equitable. Also, the meetings have been recorded, so are available for viewing at any time.

There was agreement to keep Tuesday evenings at 5:30. Kathy will contact a rep from Spectrum to attend a public meeting either Sept 21 or 28, and then follow up with Consolidated for October.

## **5. Update on consultant proposal to prepare for construction bidding**

The Town committee has received and reviewed a proposal from Casco Bay Advisors, LLC for comprehensive data collection and analysis to determine the current status of high-speed broadband service. The final product of this initiative will result in a comprehensive Report designed to achieve the goal for everyone in the Town to have access to reliable, affordable, high-speed and future ready Internet service. The Report will include a) recommended strategies and related costs for filling gaps in highspeed Internet availability, b) recommended sources of funding to implement the recommended strategies, and c) all of the data and information that is collected and developed in support of those findings.

The process would include a kick-off meeting, field audits and gap mapping, ID and validation of potential subscriber locations, validation of franchise agreement build-out obligations, data extraction from VETRO, cost estimates and recommendations. It would not include franchise agreement renegotiations, FTTH engineering, pole data collection, RFP development or process management. The data he provided could be used to create an RFP, for a cost estimate of \$3,000. This RFP development is something Town staff do not usually do.

The cost for the proposed services was under \$10,000, and that money may be available in the current budget. There could also be funding available from federal sources for which the Town has already applied, though there would need to be a review of the allowed uses. There was consensus it seemed a fair price. However, Casco Bay noted that Hancock County is also looking for similar services for a county-wide study, which could include the Town and perhaps be a duplicate effort and expense. There may also be funding available in the Economic Dev. Comm. budget.

There was a question about putting a Warrant Article next year for a build out. If so, there would be an early February deadline. It was noted the biggest challenge will be community buy-in, since it seems now there is a level of satisfaction in the status quo.

Durlin will check with the Hancock County staff about their current RFP. Generally, there was consensus to move ahead with the Casco Bay proposal, but it will require approval from the BOS.

## **5. Other Business**

The Hazardous Waste drop off program was moved this year from the high school to the Tremont Elementary School. This means a big show of 10gig speed at the high school as people wait in line to drop off materials won't happen this year.

**Next Steps**

- Durlin will check with Hancock County staff about their RFP status.
- Kathy will reach out to Spectrum and Consolidated about public meetings.
- Pete will attempt to combine the two digital surveys for a complete view.

**Future Meetings**

The next committee meeting will be Thursday, October 14, 2021 @ 4 pm via Zoom.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Kathleen W. Miller". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'K'.

Kathleen W. Miller