

Union Broadband Committee

**Committee Meeting, Dec 29, 2020, 6:30 P.M.
Draft Agenda**

1. Adjustments to the agenda
2. Approve minutes of 11/30/20 meeting
3. Status of information requests (coverage maps, planned network extensions, etc) from principal Internet Service Providers in Union:
 - Tidewater (John)
 - Spectrum (Adam)
 - Redzone (John)
4. Update of contacts with other towns
 - Rockport / Camden
 - Lincolnville
 - Alna
5. Discussion of planned survey of Union residents
6. Grant prospects
7. Other business
 - Potential meeting with Tidewater / Alan Hinsley
 - Participation in Rockport/Camden Task Force January meeting
 - More committee members
8. Next meeting date / time
9. Adjourn

Agenda Notes:

2. Draft minutes of the 11/30/20 meeting were emailed to everybody on 12/10/20.

3. ISPs

Tidewater

- Fiber map received, showing currently-in-place plus planned fiber runs

- Runs being installed through Union to Hope and Appleton under Cares Act grant will support Union users

Redzone

- Equipment being upgraded from 25 to 50 mbps under Cares Act grant

4. Other Towns

The most important item emerging from talks with other towns is the set of alternatives that have been pursued for broadening high-speed access:

There are two primary classes:

- Grant-supported build-outs by the current ISP . . . only in certain (“underserved”) areas, not town-wide (e.g., Alna; Hope/Appleton/Lincolnville)
- Municipal buildout, typically bond-funded, with subsequent contracted operation (Islesboro, Baileyville/Calais, Rockport/Camden)

6. There is a grant opportunity opening up with ConnectME in January. Historically, these grants have been directed at build-outs in “underserved” areas, a very small area in Union. This may be changing. Not clear.

There are two grant-funding classes: one for ISPs proposing to build extensions to their network (like the recent Cares Act grants), and another for towns seeking to build a municipal network.

We need someone on the committee (a volunteer) to focus on clarifying the upcoming grant targets and funding criteria, primarily by interaction with ConnectME staff. The individual will not get tuck with the actual grant application. We’ll all pitch in on that.

7. Tidewater’s Alan Hinsley has offered to come to one of our meetings (via Zoom) and present to us on how we might proceed. (Expect it to be focused on proceeding with Tidewater.)

At the 11/30/20 committee meeting, we discussed an offer from the Rockport/Camden Task Force to join with them in their effort to build a municipal fiber network for the two towns. Since then, Camden Town Manager Audra Caler extended an invitation to us through Jay to sit in the January Task Force meeting, via Zoom. They will let us know the schedule.

We need a few more committee members. If we apply for a grant through ConnectME, the granting agency expects to see a robust committee, with broad town representation. The following description is drawn directly from a Precertification that we are required to submit before applying for a grant:

“A community broadband committee is formed with members from varying backgrounds and who bring to bear diverse expertise or roles for the planning process. Relevant backgrounds:

- an official representing the affected community, including a local elected official with political will to support broadband;
- an educator who cares about educational opportunities around broadband;

- someone in economic development, including a local business owner, including someone from an industry that's important to the affected community;
- someone who depends on broadband, including a teleworker, including a student, including a healthcare provider; and
- a key individual to any such project, including someone who's integral to the fabric of the affected community.

Members with these backgrounds then provide expertise or fill roles:

- a deep diver into broadband, including someone with information technology expertise, including someone with policy expertise;
- a finance expert, including someone with banking expertise, including someone with public-private partnership experience;
- a communicator, both within the committee and from the committee;
- an energizer, who diversifies and brings together the group; and
- a visionary, who drives the process forward and keeps it upbeat.