

MINUTES

BROADBAND COMMITTEE

TUESDAY, JUNE 10, 2021

6:30 p.m.

ONLINE INTERACTIVE

Committee members present: Adam Fuller, Renee Flanders, Kimberly Grindle, Holly Savage, Michael Ross, and John Gibbons

Others present: Jay Feyler

1. The meeting was convened as a Zoom session at 6:30 P.M.
2. The Committee unanimously approved the draft minutes of the Committee meetings of 3/30/21, 5/10/21, and 5/12/21.
3. There was a brief discussion of the status of actions with LCI.
 - Recent changes at ConnectME re grant criteria have opened up grant opportunities for Union that have not been open under the previous criteria. There is a grant window opening in July. LCI will likely apply for a grant in Union under this opportunity.

Late update: The grant window is now expected to open in September, to allow

ConnectME time to rewrite the application rules to correspond with the new criteria.

- The first step in considering joining with LCI to conduct a town-wide buildout of LCI's fiber network and to prepare for a grant application is to conduct an engineering study to scope the buildout, estimate cost, and generate certain additional planning factors. At a previous meeting, Union and LCI had agreed to share the cost, at \$4.9K each. The Selectmen approved the expenditure.

By unanimous vote, the Committee agreed to move ahead with the engineering study. The Committee will coordinate with Jay re notifying LCI of this action.

4. There was a brief update of the status with the Coalition.
 - Phase 1 towns will be selected based largely on the results of the Coalition's feasibility study with Axiom. Union can be included in the study at a cost of \$5K. Jay is prepared to allocate the \$5K from the Town's ARP grant, with Select Board approval.
 - We can improve our chances of being selected as a Phase 1 town by gathering evidence of a high "take-rate" . . . likely number of subscribers . . . for a regional fiber network.
 - The interlocal agreement passed by large margins in Camden, Rockport, and Thomaston. The Coalition will be moving quickly to launch a nonprofit corporation . . .

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the Midcoast Internet Development Corporation . . . as the entity that will take all further actions for the Coalition.

By unanimous vote, the Committee agreed to request that the Select Board approve the \$5K required to participate in the Coalition's feasibility study.

5. There was an informal, interactive discussion of the pros and cons of each of the two approaches, culminating in an informal, not-to-be-recorded straw poll on which way the individual members were leaning. The poll indicated that the members were largely undecided, pending the availability of further information from the two studies . . . LCI's engineering study, and the Coalition's feasibility study. The members decided to await the results of the two studies, plus certain subsequent actions, before attempting to make a recommendation to the Select Board.
6. The Committee addressed two additional topics:
 - How to conduct an outreach to the citizens, in order to heighten awareness of the Committee's activities, the two alternatives that the Committee is considering, and the pros and cons of each. The members agreed that this is a complex topic, with important ramifications for the Town, and considered several methods of disseminating the information, including website postings, flyers, and public hearings. Finalizing the process was left to a later meeting.
 - How to conduct a survey of potential subscribers to a regional municipal network, as an aid to being selected as a Phase 1 town by the Coalition. Several ideas were put forth, and finalization was postponed pending further clarification from the Coalition.
7. Regarding future meetings, the members agreed to maintain the current schedule of meeting regularly on the last Tuesday of each month, with deviations from this schedule if necessary to accommodate the schedules of other organizations with whom the Committee needs to meet.

The Committee also decided that the Zoom format was working reasonably well, and we should continue to meet in this format except in special circumstances. (Background: Under new State guidelines, elected boards and committees need to return to in-person meetings as of June 15th; other committees (like us) have a choice.)

Late update: Under new legal guidance, it has been decided that after June 30th, all future Committee meetings will need to take place in person at the Town Office in the downstairs conference room. Our next meeting, on June 29th, will be via Zoom, and subsequent meetings will need to conform to the new guidance.

Respectfully submitted,

John Gibbons
Secretary