

Union Broadband Committee

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

1. Adjustments to the agenda
2. Approve minutes of 11/16/20 meeting
3. Status of information requests (coverage maps, etc) from principal Internet Service Providers in Union:
 - Tidewater (John)
 - Spectrum (Adam)
 - Redzone (John)
4. Status of contacts with other towns that have established Broadband Committees, regarding their experiences to date (John):
 - Hope
 - Camden / Rockport
 - Lincolnville
 - Islesboro
 - Other
5. Discussion of potential surveys of Union residents and businesses re broadband availability at their location, their selected plan and pricing, speed test results, plus their projected uses and expectations
6. Other committee business
7. Date for next meeting
8. Adjourn

Agenda Notes:

2. Draft minutes were emailed to everybody on Nov 19th.
3. We need a map of where the current strings of optical fiber (Tidewater) and cable (Spectrum) are. (I.e., what roads they are on, down to address-level, We'd also like to know the plans for near-term extensions to the current runs. We need the information

to form initial cost estimates for covering the entire town (i.e., how many more miles?), and to form initial estimates of where the broadband coverage gaps are. (The latter is essential information if we apply for grants.)

4. We've been in touch with a number of other towns, and we've gathered reports from online sources on still others. I'm trying to get them organized on the shared Google Drive folder that Chris set up for us.

All the towns we've communicated with so far are going with optical fiber; none have selected cable.

All have started with a an initial planning phase that includes a survey of the town, a design for a fiber net that will reach all of the properties in the town, and a specification that can be sent to prospective bidders for the buildout. This phase is typically funded by the towns.

Camden/Rockport have a joint committee that is getting ready to request bids on a fiber network. They are interested in having other towns join with them.

Many towns end up building a town-owned fiber network, with several different operating arrangements:

Islesboro: Contracts with GWI to run the network
Offers a low subscriber fee (\$30/mo) for the fiber connection; plus services (phone, TV)
Insurance, maintenance, other costs are subsidized with town funds

Calais / Baileyville

Set up a nonprofit corporation (Downeast Broadband Utility, DBU) which operates as a nonprofit utility
User fees cover all costs; no taxpayer support

(Another; try- ing to find it) Maintains the fiber network as a town-owned resource
Offers it for lease to multiple operators, to provide competing services (Internet access, phone, TV)

5. We need a town-wide survey of Union residents and businesses, like the 2018 survey that Jay sent us results from, in order to see what access speeds people are actually seeing now (necessary if we want grant support) and whether people would switch to fiber if it were available at moderate cost. A sample from Lincolnville is attached (not ideal, but a sample.) Maybe we could ask Jay about setting up the survey on the Union website and/or Facebook page, with a link to a speedtest site. And Holly could publicize it in the business community.

6. Maybe more committee members? ConnectME expects a robust committee if we decide to apply for a grant. And there's a lot for the committee to do.