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ConnectME Authority Meeting Notes & Video - June 19, 2015

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ConnectME Authority

May 1, 2015 – Meeting Notes

1. Introductions

Authority Board Members: Jean Wilson, Andy Hagler, Ralph Johnson, Greg McNeal, and Dick Thompson.

Authority Staff: Phil Lindley, Lisa Leahy, and David Maxwell

Board members, Authority staff, and a representative of the James W. Sewall Company introduced themselves, as did members of the public.

2. FirstNet Report

Lisa Leahy gave a report on the status of the FirstNet project in Maine (<http://www.firstnetme.gov/>). The ConnectME Authority assumed responsibility for the NTIA grant and project from the Maine Emergency Management Agency (within the Department of Defense and Veterans' Services) due to Authority staff expertise in and familiarity with broadband issues and the federal oversight agency (the Department of Commerce), its staff and its reporting requirements. Lisa is the Single Point of Contact (SPOC) for the project.

3. Legislative Activity Report and Discussion

Phil Lindley gave an update of legislative activity (see <http://www.maine.gov/connectme/about/ProposedLegislation2015.htm>).

Dick Thompson reported that no work sessions on bills pertaining to broadband or of interest to the Authority have been scheduled. He anticipates a consolidation of the many bills into a smaller number for final consideration by the Energy, Utilities, and Technology Committee. Dick expressed a desire for legislative action this session. Remaining Board members agreed.

4. Municipal Broadband/Networks Discussion

A number of meeting attendees addressed the Board regarding thoughts (pros and cons) on municipal networks. Those who spoke include:

Seth Hall, resident of Waldoboro

Ben Sanborn, Telecommunications Association of Maine

John Lawrence, resident of Waldoboro

Jeff Letourneau, Network Maine

Belle Ryder, Assistant City Manager of Orono

Beth Osler, UNITEL

Don Flewelling, Pioneer Broadband
Mike Edgecomb, Time-Warner
Michael Forcillo, Redzone
Page Clason, resident of Islesboro

The following is a summary of comments shared by the above:

- Municipalities need technical and financial assistance; grant funds should be partitioned among segments which are served, underserved, and unserved
- The ConnectME Authority is charged with promoting private investment in broadband services. Municipal networks should exist, but the financial risk should be borne by the municipality. The ConnectME Authority should not encourage municipal networks.
- Maine School and Library Network (MSLN) grants should include involvement from the community (another meeting attendee responded that municipalities are precluded from involvement in MSLN grants).
- Large capital investment is needed to build or rebuild network infrastructure. Public funds should be invested in projects with expected long life.
- Network engineering is key to providing the appropriate service. The ConnectME Authority grant process should include funding for feasibility studies.
- In recent years, Time-Warner has invested \$300M in broadband infrastructure in Maine. The focus of funding by the ConnectME Authority should be unserved areas only.
- Municipalities should not own networks due to operations and maintenance costs.
- Municipal networks can work; Islesboro was forced to do it.

5. Executive Director Report

Phil Lindley gave a brief report of recent and upcoming events regarding the Authority (Broadband Day, Hall of Flags; Broadband Summit with MMA Tech Conference).

6. Public Comment

There was no further public comment offered.

The meeting adjourned at 4:07PM.

The next Board meeting will be held on Fri., June 5, at 9:00AM in the Worster Room of the Public Utilities Commission (since rescheduled to June 19th at 2:00pm).