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ConnectME Authority Meeting Notes & Video - June 12, 2013

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ConnectME Authority

June 12, 2013 – Meeting Notes

1. Introduction of ConnectME Authority Members and Staff

Authority Members: Dick Thompson; Ralph Johnson; and Greg McNeal

Staff: Phil Lindley; Lisa Leahy; and David Maxwell

Dick Thompson was elected to be the chair for this meeting, in the absence of Jean Wilkinson, current Board chair.

2. ConnectME Authority Grant Extension Requests and Revisions

Since filing a request for extensions, Pioneer Broadband has discussed access issues with FairPoint New England. As a result of those discussions, Pioneer Broadband withdrew the request for extensions as they are not necessary at this time.

Six (6) extension requests from Tidewater Telecom, Inc., and three (3) extension requests from Lincolnville Networks, Inc., were unanimously approved. The extensions were necessary because Tidewater/Lincolnville is changing the technology from copper based DSL service to fiber to the home (FTTH) service. The change will require time for re-engineering, but will deliver a much superior service to the end user. The company will complete the projects with the original grant amounts, absorbing any extra costs. The resulting service will have a higher installation fee, with the same monthly cost. The granted extensions range from late 2013 to early 2014.

3. ConnectME 8th Round Grant Award Recommendations

The Executive Director (E/D) gave an overview of the grant application scoring process and the basis for the recommendations put forth to the Board. Thirty-five (35) applications were received and twenty (20) were deemed eligible for scoring. The Board unanimously approved sixteen grant awards. One award (Premium Choice Broadband for Kokadjo/Frenchtown) was subsequently challenged by FairPoint, to be discussed at the September meeting.

Grant award recommendations can be found on the ConnectME Authority website at:
<http://www.maine.gov/connectme/grants/docs/8/EighthRoundRecommendations.pdf>

4. Annual Budget Review

The E/D presented the approved annual budget for 2012-2013 showing expected changes of less than 10%. The Authority's auditor (MacPage LLC) said that unless the actual budget is expected to vary by more than 10% from the approved, no revision approval is necessary.

5. Executive Director Report

- Legislative:

The Board was advised of the status of two bills of interest to the Authority. LD 876 (A Resolution to Establish a Working Group to Study issues relating to Broadband Infrastructure Deployment) became law without the Governor's signature on May 22, 2013. The working group will begin meeting after the resolve becomes effective in October and will be conducted within the Broadband Capacity Building project using Planning Decisions to coordinate the group and the report.

LD 513, a bond issue which would, in part, allocate to the Authority \$20M over five (5) years, is still under legislative consideration.

- Financial:

The ConnectME Fund and the ConnectME Authority budget documents were reviewed. A Board member inquired about the status of the Broadband Sustainability Fund matter regarding the requirement of payment by providers into the Fund. The E/D briefed the Board on the progress of the investigation being conducted by the Public Utilities Commission. An opinion is expected by sometime in the fall.

6. Public Comment Period

No questions or comments were made.

The meeting adjourned at 2:37PM.