

10-4-2012

ConnectME Authority Meeting Notes - October 4, 2012

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Recommended Citation

ConnectME Authority, "ConnectME Authority Meeting Notes - October 4, 2012" (2012). *ConnectME Authority Meetings*. Paper 15.
http://digitalmaine.com/connectme_meetings/15

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ConnectME Authority

October 4, 2012 – Meeting Notes

1. Introduction of ConnectME Authority Members and Staff

Authority Members: Dick Thompson, serving as chair for the meeting; Greg McNeal; Ralph Johnson

Staff: Phil Lindley, David Maxwell

2. Annual Audit Review

Bob Dube from Macdonald Page was present to review the findings of the audit. He thanked ConnectME staff and the staff of Rolka Loube Saltzer Associates (RLSA) for cooperation and efforts throughout the year. Bob indicated that there are no open items associated with the audit. He reviewed: the financial report and three (3) notes contained; the single audit with particular mention of the finding relative to tracking and recording grants receivables, including suggested corrective actions; the management letter with a recommendation of an annual budget; and the adjustments. ConnectME staff is working with RLSA on new practices to address the findings and recommendations. Additionally, staff will be looking at historical revenue and expense information in order to identify trends and possibilities for budgeting and report to the Board at the next meeting.

Action: Authority members voted to accept and approve the audit as presented.

3. ConnectME Grant Award Scoring Guide

Given that members of the Board were absent from the meeting, a thorough discussion of this topic was postponed until the next Authority meeting. It was mentioned that members of the Advisory Council wish to see greater objectivity in the community support category.

4. ConnectME Advisory Council

The Board was briefed on the Advisory Council meeting which was held on September 25, 2012. Topics discussed at the Advisory Council meeting were: the strategic plan; extensions for completion of work for grant awards; a definition for the term “underserved;” tracking past grants; and scoring guidelines. In order to have an in-depth discussion of the strategic plan at the next Council meeting, members were asked to familiarize themselves with the tactics and actions for recommendations 3, 4, and 5 and be prepared to discuss various approaches. Council members agreed that no policy relative to extensions for grant work is necessary. Rather, the practice of consideration on a case by case basis should continue. The group discussed the possibility of a definition for the term “underserved.” It was agreed that it is not necessary at this time.

ConnectME is working with past grant recipients to obtain data relative to projections to actuals in terms of connections. Some grantees are better able than others to pull this information. Going forward, post-work reporting will be required. The Council agreed that it wished to see greater objectivity in the category of community support.

5. Presentation on FirstNet

Wayne Gallant of the Office of Information Technology shared information relative to a new federal initiative designed to create a Nationwide Public safety Broadband Network. Significant federal funding has been identified, but the implications for Maine and other states are still being identified. The Board will be kept apprised as information becomes available. (see related slides)

6. Review of Broadband Capacity Building Project

David Maxwell of the ConnectME staff updated the Board on the Capacity Building Project. The project, funded through a grant from the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA), has multiple purposes with a primary focus of developing and implementing strategies for use of broadband in Maine. The grant period extends to December 31, 2014.

7. Executive Director Report

- Grant Extension Requests:

Two grant extension requests were presented to the Board for consideration. For the Great Wass Island Broadband Project, axiom technologies requested a six-month extension due to a delay in obtaining equipment. For the Brookton and Forest City Broadband Project, the Washington County Unorganized Territories requested a one-year extension due to challenges in resolving colocation issues.

Action: the Board approved each request for an extension.

- Financial statements provided and reviewed:

ConnectME Fund Performance Report; and
Broadband Sustainability Fund Report

- A letter from the Telecommunications Association of Maine was received in response to the GWI request regarding the Broadband Sustainability Fee. Board members agreed no action is required and will see how the matter resolves.

8. Public Comment Period

Don Flewelling of Pioneer Broadband spoke in support of the scoring guide; specifically, the \$500.00 level for installation cost per customer contributed by the company.

Ben Sanborn addressed a remark made earlier about the Broadband Sustainability Fund and what liability might occur if it is determined that fees paid in be returned to the payer.

The meeting adjourned at 3:14PM.