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ConnectME Authority Meeting Notes - October 8, 2009

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ConnectME Authority

October 8, 2009 – Meeting Notes

I. Introductions

Authority Members: Dick Thompson (Acting Chair), Sharon Reishus,
Mitch Davis
Staff: Phil Lindley, Kelly Arata

II. ARRA-NTIA Broadband Grant Applications

Dick Thompson stated that awards are granted under several categories within the NTIA Notice of Funding Availability. The states can review applications and provide recommendations to NTIA. The Broadband Strategy Council (BBSC) was created to assist in the evaluation of the proposals, provide their input to the Authority, and then the Authority to forward to the Governor who makes recommendations as appropriate.

The BBSC provided the Authority with a draft cover memo from Jean Wilson, Authority Chair, to Governor Baldacci with the BBSC's recommendations and assessments for the Maine-specific applications, the same for multi-state applications and a spreadsheet summarizing both types of applications.

Dick Thompson asked Phil Lindley to explain the BBSC process in evaluating 19 Maine-specific applications and the multi-state applications. Phil Lindley stated that the BBSC met five times to establish an evaluation process and to review the applications. Here is the list of recommendations for Maine-specific projects.

Recommended for Funding – Maine-Specific Projects

- Axiom Technologies, LLC - \$1,634,224
- Biddeford Internet Corp (d/b/a GWI) – \$25,402,904
- Chebeague.net, Inc. - \$73,470
- FairPoint Communications, Inc. - \$7,865,817
- FairPoint Communications, Inc. - \$1,802,384
- FairPoint Communications, Inc. - \$4,732,930
- Maine State Library - \$1,216,467
- Somerset Telephone Company - \$5,313,171
- The West Penobscot Telephone and Telegraph Company - \$838,480

Projects of Interest – Maine-specific Projects

- Faith in Action Community Connection - \$35,000
- NATVentures, LLC - \$34,000,000
- NATVentures, LLC - \$50,000,000
- Southern Aroostook Cooperative Board of Education - \$1,514,198

Not Recommended for Funding – Maine-specific Projects

- Motorbrain Consulting, Inc. - \$5,571,784
- USA Web Host - \$928,000
- USA Web Host - \$904,000
- Vanu Coverage Co. - \$15,759,650
- Vanu Coverage Co. - \$16,060,783
- Vanu Coverage Co. - \$10,383,832

A BBSC subcommittee reviewed the multi-state applications to assess the impact on Maine and determined that only one multistate project was of interest, Broadband for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing - \$70,000,000. Phil Lindley stated that it was difficult to make a determination, if they didn't know Maine's share of the request. Dick Thompson stated that he is the Governor's designated contact to NTIA and knows that NTIA has the un-redacted versions of the applications for a more thorough review. NTIA will make the final decisions.

Phil Lindley noted that the Authority received two letters in support: (1) Rep. Seth Berry filed correspondence with the Authority regarding the support for the Three-Ring Binder Project with restrictions; and (2) Senate President Mitchell and Speaker Pingree sent a letter to the Authority stating that they believed that the BBSC's recommendations are sound and thoughtful and recommends adoption of their recommendations.

Dick Thompson asked for comments from the public. There were none.

A motion was made to adopt the BBSC recommendations. The letter from the Senate President and Speaker as well as Rep. Berry's letter should be submitted with their recommendations to the Governor. All members present were in favor.

Other Business:

A. Advisory Council Update

Fletcher Kittredge provided an update on the Advisory Council's meeting held on September 15, 2009. At the request of the Authority, the Advisory Council convened a meeting to discuss three topics: Overlap, how long for conditions if required, and the definition of broadband. While the Advisory Council members present thought that the Authority's funds should go to unserved areas, they

deferred to the Authority on what constitutes broadband. There is a national effort by the FCC to define broadband.

Dick Thompson recommended placing this item on the next agenda for the Authority.

Sharon Reishus recommended that Phil Lindley contact interested parties for further dialogue.

Phil Lindley stated that Time Warner Cable has asked for a substitution for their member on the Advisory Council from Keith Burley to Armando Ruiz.

B. Mapping and Inventory Project Update

Phil Lindley provided a status update of the Maine Broadband Mapping and Inventory Project as well as provided a draft press release that James W. Sewall had been awarded a three-year contract to map broadband service and availability in Maine. Mr. Lindley further stated that four other states' mapping grant applications were awarded, but not without revision. We have not yet heard from NTIA regarding our application.

Mitch Davis asked if there were projects for Native American tribes. Phil Lindley stated that NATVentures is the Native American Tribes organization. We reviewed their applications and they are on our list under Projects of Interest.

Next Meeting

Phil Lindley stated that he would like another grant round before the end of the year, to be discussed at the next Authority meeting.