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ConnectME Authority Meeting Notes - August 17, 2010

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ConnectME Authority

August 17, 2010 – Meeting Notes

I. Introductions

Authority Members: Greg McNeal, Acting Chair, Jack Cashman, Mitch Davis

Staff: Phil Lindley, Lisa Leahy, Kelly Arata

II. Planning Project Update and Contract Award

James Sewall Company was awarded a second contract to perform the planning piece of the Authority's NTIA Mapping and Planning grant. Jim Page from James Sewall Company organized a team to work on the Strategic Planning Project for 2010-2014. Mr. Page will bring the team to the next Authority meeting for a full presentation. The team consists of James W. Sewall Company, Packard Judd Kaye, Jeff Letourneau, and Dr. Todd Gabe. He reviewed the tasks that start with Baseline Needs Assessment and ends with a Report to the Federal Agency. In addition, Mr. Page noted that legislation may be needed to implement the federal changes and that there are no funds currently for advertising or outreach.

Mitch Davis asked for clarification on the baseline use assessment. Mr. Page stated that part of that goes hand and hand with the mapping piece to establish a starting point for the projects. Phil Lindley stated that there is a supplemental grant for mapping and other projects that could be used for public awareness. Mitch Davis asked how the money would be spent. Jim Page stated that Phil Lindley will provide the breakdown.

Rep. Cynthia Dill asked if Mr. Page is a state employee. Mr. Page stated that he is a contract consultant and not a state employee. Fletcher Kittredge was interested in seeing a workflow chart because they have a different project that overlaps this project and would like to work together. Mr. Page stated that there were commonalities but would need to clear it with the Authority.

Greg McNeal stated that there is a lot of activity and wants to come up to speed as he is new to the Authority. Jim Page stated that turning the data into useful information is the challenge. Greg McNeal thinks the plan is well laid out. Mr. Page will finalize the schedule before the next meeting. Jack Cashman asked if the project is front-end loaded for this year. Mr. Page responded that it was.

Jack Cashman made a motion for the Authority to sign the contract for Agreement to Purchase Services with Sewall Company. All members present voted in favor.

III. Mapping Project Update

Phil Lindley provided an update on the supplemental mapping grant application. The NTIA required the application be reduced by approximately 8% because NTIA's grant program had been reduced by \$302 million. The awards should be announced in September.

Randy Claar from James Sewall Company stated that October 1, 2010, is the next deadline followed by April 11, 2011 for data deliveries to NTIA. There has been outreach and collaboration with potential broadband service providers and to the five First Nations. Data gathering from providers has an August 31st deadline in order to meet the October 1st delivery deadline to NTIA. Mr. Claar also gave an update on data gathering for the wired and fixed wireless coverage, mobile wireless and satellite coverage as well as a growing list of community anchor institutions. Data verification is also being completed for mobile wireless, FCC Consumer Broadband Test Data and FCC Form 477 Aggregate Data. Surveys will be on-line on the Authority's website and also will be mailed. A State Broadband Website will also be available for use by the general public that will show broadband service availability and provide a form for user feedback. The SBDD grant has been amended and a supplemental application was filed that requested funds for Years 3 to 5 of mapping activities, developing address level data, creation of state broadband capacity building program and creation of state

technical assistance program. They are waiting on an award letter for ARRA funds that must be obligated by September 30th.

Mitch Davis asked if there is a map overlay that shows the First Nations reservation boundaries. Mr. Claar stated that he will get the information for Mr. Davis. Greg McNeal asked if these surveys were random and if they had pilot cases. Mr. Claar stated that there will be four communities in the pilot. Rep. Dill asked if James Sewall Company was coordinating with the Maine Fiber Advisory Board in regards to community anchor institutions. Mr. Claar stated that they were coordinating with them. Phil Lindley stated that he is on the MFC Advisory Board as well.

IV. Grant Extension Request – Town of Edgecomb

Phil Lindley recommended that the Authority grant the Town of Edgecomb's request for a grant extension for 60 days. Jack Cashman made a motion to grant the Town of Edgecomb's grant extension request. All members present were in favor.

V. Executive Director Report

Phil Lindley stated that Pioneer Broadband and Maine Fiber are working together on some of Pioneer's fiber backhaul service needs. Greg McNeal asked if they needed a Memorandum of Understanding. Josh Broder from Maine Fiber stated that they were still working on it. Don Flewelling from Pioneer is okay with that idea. Josh Broder stated that he would share the final MOU with the Authority. In addition, Don Flewelling stated that there will be a cost savings of \$500-\$800,000 with that collaboration.

For the fifth grant round, Phil Lindley stated that he will send out a notice on August 20th and make full applications available by September 27th. In addition, Mr. Lindley noted that he added a new paragraph similar to what NTIA does by asking for full cooperation the mapping and planning projects.

Phil Lindley reviewed the financial statements from the Maine ConnectME Fund.

VI. Comments

Rep. Dill recommended that the Authority consider reducing or eliminating the 0.25% surcharge on consumers' communications bills. She is considering putting in legislation regarding the surcharge as there are other federal funds currently and potentially available. Greg McNeal is interested in having people come in to talk about this idea and what the money is used for. Jack Cashman thinks that this is a good topic for discussion and wants to see other sources of funds that are available. Ben Sanborn stated that the Authority could say the maximum amount that you can collect and could be flexible and evaluate what is needed. Phil Lindley stated that there is statutory language that includes the "not to exceed" provision. Mr. Lindley further stated that our goal is still unserved areas and mapping will show where it is and where it is not. Mitch Davis stated that the Authority can look at where we can go five years from now and also work with the Advisory Council.

Ben Sanborn from the Telephone Association of Maine stated that they were confused by the Authority's reply comments in a recent FCC docket in contrast to the PUC's comments. There seems to be a conflict and asked if they worked together. Jack Cashman stated that we did not coordinate as well as we could but we did talk afterwards. Phil Lindley stated that the Authority used a public policy point of view and that regulatory agencies have a different charge. The Governor's Office thought it made good sense for the Authority to craft from their position. Jack Cashman stated that the Authority and the PUC agreed on most aspects of the docket.