

## Lubec Broadband Working Group Meeting

August 18, 2022. 2:00 PM

Members Present: Martha Howell, Rachel Rubeor, Denise Dalton-Rule, Ben Levek, Renee Gray, Nancy Harrison and Mark Ouellette (representing Axiom)

I. Reviewed and accepted minutes from previous meeting, August 4

II. Axiom – Next Steps

- Mark anticipates Connect Maine Funding Application is expected to be released in October with a submission 30 days later. He encouraged Lubec to begin developing application content, especially about public outreach and meetings, support from Town and community (especially Town Vote supporting broadband). NOTE: We are exploring including a broadband flyer in the October tax bill. If approved, it is anticipated a decision will be made in 30-60 days and contract with state 45-60 days after that.
- Mark acknowledged he did not attend a recent webinar about the future RFP which was more oriented to ISP concerning technical requirements rather than the public.
- He expressed a major concern that Connect Maine may require applicants to offer a low-cost option of \$30/month for 50:10 speed. (This would be for the general public and not limited to low-income subscribers.) If this is the case, it will likely cause a major challenge to Lubec's revenue projections because a disproportionate # of subscribers may opt for this option. This scenario doesn't support revenue projections and will likely not allow payback for town to pay off revenue bonds. Another concern is the state's goal is 100:100 speeds for broadband, and even if that lower speed is limited to lower-income subscribers it creates a 2<sup>nd</sup> class access to the technology. Mark is preparing a response to this concern and will submit to Connect Maine Authority. Lubec and other towns will be asked to send letters expressing the same concern.
- Application: In the past, technical requirements were weighted to financial pro-forma showing 5-year projects of expenses and

revenues and detailed cost of building materials. Axiom will prepare this content.

- Contract with Axiom doesn't need to be signed before the grant is received and Mark will continue to help prepare funding application.
- Mark wanted us to be aware Axiom is in discussion with major investors who may propose a \$20 million Washington County broadband project owned by Axiom. They are discussing this concept with the Island Institute. Lubec would not be required to be part of this prospective project and Axiom would continue to work with us as a municipally owned project.

### III. Marketing / Communication

- Martha has spoken with Town of Leeds which hired a marketing/communication consultant. Mark believes this is an expensive and unnecessary cost. He is willing to share Axiom collateral for Lubec to use. If we decide to hire a consultant it was agreed to not present slick materials.
- We were advised to anticipate possible interference/objections by Spectrum. They recently contacted Renee asking to be involved in Lubec's project. They were informed an RFP was issued in the Spring and they had an opportunity to submit. It is possible Spectrum may push a social media campaign and provide distorted information on Town's broadband plan.

### IV. Feedback from Other Towns working with Axiom

- Mark is still trying to connect with Dean Preston about potential for Trescott and Edmonds being part of Lubec project.
- Martha will connect with Southport
- Nancy got no response from Town of Arrowsic. She reported Cranberry Isles built out its system 2017/18 and now has 70% of homes as subscribers. They are pleased with having Axiom manage the system.
- Rachel reported Isle Au Haut is satisfied with Axiom management.
- Denise reported Georgetown – also working with Axiom – has experienced licensing hassles about utility poles with Consolidated and is experiencing delays. Hawkeye (contractor) and Connect Maine have been helpful. They suggested inserting in Axiom contract clauses about insurance and damages. They are not using a

consultant. Waiting for call back from Towns of China and Chebeague Island.

#### V. Miscellaneous Issues

- Lubec Town office may have sufficient space in the storage room used for Grand Manan equipment. Will need 2 racks 3' x 3', power supply providing 200 amps, Axiom would need 24/7 access if emergency or repair needed. May not need generator if Town Office system can provide emergency power. (This would save \$15k - \$20k in application budget. Alternatively, grant budget could pay for a new generator).
- Consultants: Mark recommended Brian Lippold from Casco Bay Advisors in Gardner or Mission Broadband from Bangor who could oversee Axiom engineering due diligence during build out process. Howard Small/Grand Manan has already indicated a willingness to do this for Lubec.
- Subscribers: Mark recommends starting to recruit subscribers now to be included in application. Nobody would be obligated to provide money up front but would demonstrate commitment to Connect Maine.
- Marketing/Communication Strategy: Add broadband content to Town's website, continue to provide update information to Shell Fish Committee, Masons, Women's Club. Martha will develop a one-page info sheet with bullet points, and organize future informational meetings for September and October. The committee will research adding a QR code to public materials. Rene will add broadband project updates to town website and meeting notes for Select Board meetings.
- Island Institute: Ben noted they have issued an RFP for "Broadband for Island and Coastal Sustainability Planning Grant". Grants are \$5k - \$15k and require match. Ben will ask if in-kind (committee volunteer hours) and cash from Connect Maine (\$2k) will qualify. It is possible town's ARPA grant can be used. Renee would need to have a budget and work plan to present to Select Board for approval.

#### VI. Next Meeting: Thursday, September 1, 2 – 3:30 pm.