

Lubec Broadband/Fiber Working Group Meeting

September 20, 2022. 4:00 PM

Attending: In person & Zoom: Martha Howell, Rachel Rubeor, Denise Dalton-Rule, Ben Levek, Renee Gray, Nancy Harrison, Mark Ouellette, and Tim O'Neill.

Trescott Visitors: Diane Griffin and Martin Blaney

NOTE: Trescott and Edmonds will be submitting a future broadband/fiber application and Lubec welcomes them to learn from our experiences.

Reviewed and accepted minutes from previous meeting, September 1.

I. Information Meeting: September 14.

- Feedback was attendance was good and room was full.
- The conversation was positive and good questions were asked by persons attending.
- Christa Thorpe, Island Institute, announced Lubec's funding application was approved for \$15,000 to support Broadband/Fiber Initiative marketing and communication.
- One relevant follow up question after the meeting asked by Dana Bradley: *"If there a power outage will broadband still be available?"* Mark Ouellette/Axiom said if the homeowner has a generator, internet access will still be functional.

II. Island Institute Grant

- For Lubec's grant award \$3,000 will be used for direct payments for printing, advertising, and administration expenses and \$12,000 for marketing and communications support.
- The Island Institute (II) will be contracting with a marketing consultant to provide support to Maine communities. II and Maine Broadband Coalition (MBC) would like to work with Lubec to help build out template for other towns. Discussion on this potential was favorable and we anticipate Lubec will help pioneer this initiative. (The \$12,000 of the grant will be used to support this initiative.)
- The committee was reminded that expenditures from this fund must go to the Select Board for approval as the committee has no independent spending authority.

III. Grant Application to Maine Connectivity Authority (MCA)

- MCA has two webinars for its upcoming funding cycle: “Get Ready” on September 19 (Martha Howell and Ben Levek participated) and “Get Connected” on October 14. It was determined Lubec has already achieved the goals of “Get Ready” and the “Get Connected” content will be more relevant for submitting a buildout application.
- There was much discussion whether the Lubec Broadband/Fiber Initiative may need an engineering consultant involved in the development of the funding application. Christa Thorpe/II initially recommends not doing this because MCA will be using Tilson Technologies to evaluate technical aspects of application and if a project needs improvements to make it viable there will be an opportunity to do so without disqualification for funding. Also, Tilson will be used by MCA to monitor the project as it progresses which should protect the Town’s interests also.
- Howard Small/Grand Manan is agreeable for occasional phone consult at no cost.
- Axiom will provide all the technical aspects for the Lubec application.
- The MCA application portal for online application will open in early October and will require Axiom and Lubec coordination on content and review before final submission.
- Ben will develop community narrative excerpted from recent funding applications (Connect Maine, Island Institute, Resiliency Grant) and send to Mark after review by the committee.

IV. Axiom

- Axiom will send a contract template and for review by Lubec and its attorney. MCA will have legal representation (Jensen Baird) for all its funding decisions. This is same law firm Town of Lubec uses. (Mark Bower is recommended attorney.)
- Axiom uses Hawkeye for all its build out work.
- Mark outlined 3 important project phases:
 1. Kim Emerson with Axiom will help us to apply to PUC to be an eligible pole licensee. (This is free and decision is typically made in 6 weeks.) Lubec will hold the licenses.
 2. It will be necessary to procure insurance for pole licenses. Mark estimates this to cost \$15,000/yr.

3. Other critical insurance: General Liability - \$4M, Workers Comp - \$1M, Auto Insurance (NA, Axiom to cover) and Umbrella Policy - \$5M.
 - Lubec application will require line by line-item budget.
 - Other insurance issues to be aware of: Builders Risk Insurance or Surety Bond (which could be expensive, potential. \$90,000 cost). These could be added as a line item to project budget for grant funding. State of Maine will provide stringent oversight of Axiom, so may not be needed. Not all towns do this, and Mark did not recommend.

V. Miscellaneous

- Mark recommends having \$50,000 as a rolling balance for the life of the project. This may be generated through subscriber rates as revenue to the Town. It might be considered as being “self-insured” for catastrophic events such as a main line fiber break, and replacement of equipment. The funds might also be used to provide a subsidy for home connections after the initially free installations, which might otherwise cost \$299 - \$499.
- Mark also believes that Lubec may qualify for a much better match rate on the grant than originally expected, 70/30 or better, rather than 50/50.
- None of the Agenda items concerning Outreach were discussed and will be rolled into next meeting.

NEXT MEETING: THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 29, 2 PM