

*The Midcoast Internet Coalition (MIC) meeting streamed from and recorded by The Town of Camden, including LiveStream, Broadcast on Town of Camden YouTube Channel.*

**Midcoast Internet Coalition Meeting**

**July 14th, 2021, 5:00 p.m.**

**Zoom**

**MINUTES**

**1. Call to Order**

**Participants:**

Chair: Debra Hall (Rockport); Vice Chair: Matt Siegel (Camden)

Representatives:

Camden: Marc Ratner (SB), Jeremy Martin, Planning Director

Hope: Sarah Ann Smith (SB), Melissa Foster Hall

Lincolnton: Josh Gerritsen (SB), Jordan Barnett-Parker (SB), Steve Koltai

Owls Head: Jacob Post, Jason Philbrook

Rockport: Denise Munger (SB)

Searsmont: Peter Milinazzo (SB)

South Thomaston: Cliff Dacso, Lynne Canavan, Anne Just

Southwestern Waldo County: Bob Kurak (SB) (Guest)

Thomaston: Zel Bowman-LeBerge(SB), Brian Doyle, Econ Dev Director

Union: John Gibbons (Guest)

**Other Invited Guests: (July 2021)**

Jerry Wetterskog

Donna Beninati

Meeting call to order 5:02pm

Introduced Guests: Donna Beninati and Jerry Wetterskog from Blue Hill Peninsula

**2. Action Item – Motion to Approve May 12th, 2021 Minutes –**

Approval of May 12th, 2021 minutes distributed on July 12, 2021.

Motion: Jeremy Martin, 2<sup>nd</sup> Matt Siegel

Passed unanimously

**3. Action Item – Motion to Approve June 16th, 2021 Minutes –**

Approval June 16th, 2021 minutes distributed on July 12, 2021.

Motion: Matt Siegel, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Denise Munger

Passed unanimously

Q from Josh Gerritsen: Needs instruction on how to access webpage to upload material including monthly minutes. Debra Hall to follow-up.

**4. Report by Leadership Team– Discussion Items**

Debra Hall, Denise Munger and Matt Siegel reported on activities since the last MIC meeting, summarized as follows:

- Shifting regional strategy: Facing the fiber vs fiber from Otelco, Core Four build Otelco, building Camden, Thomaston and Rockland – cherry picking / redlining
- Revised MIDC strategy to be “first out of the gate” in these dense service areas. Will be part of the upcoming study.

John Gibbons: Camden, Thomaston, and Rockland are the phase one towns?

Debra Hall: Yes in order to be successful and have a viable financial model.

John Gibbons: Why are we welcoming Otelco?

Denise Munger: We are not welcoming Otelco.

Marc Ratner, provided context, including the successful voting results and density requirements that have made investment attractive, if cherry picking and red lining.

Debra Hall: Discussed basic economics of a revenue-based business

- MIC Planning Grant: Not funded for \$20K; area already served.
- MIC working on many levels: Fed lobbying, state legislation and policy implementation, county appeal for ARP funding. To be discussed later.
- Statewide recognition: As a resource, partner, and development corporation

#### **5. MIDC Update, Regional Utility – Discussion Item**

Brief review of legal structure, sent out articles of incorporation and interim bylaws

MIDC Articles of Incorporation filed, creating legal structure (Attachment C for review)

MIDC Interim Bylaws, the procedural outline, created (Attachment D for review)

Now: Allows the MIDC to open bank accounts. Updated bylaws as needed can be drafted in the fall. No meeting of utility to date. Actions taken by unanimous consent, as permitted in bylaws and by statute. Officers elected:

Debra Hall, Executive Director and President

Denise Munger, Treasurer

Matt Siegel, Vice President and Secretary

Camden, Rockport signed on as charter municipalities.

Thomaston, approved but paper work is outstanding, and Rockland in process.

#### **6. Axiom Technologies planning study / network design**

AXIOM, Phase One – underway, initial payments made directly to Axiom from participating towns.

Phase one in progress: with Camden, Rockport, Thomaston, Rockland, South Thomaston (pending funds), Owls Head, Cushing and Union

Invoiced directly to Axiom.

Brian Doyle: Thomaston accepted the ILA and to fund their study

Looking to Rockland’s vote to join ILA in August

Updates: Report/study of network design, rough costs, pro-forma financial statements, revised strategic plan in the face of Otelco.

Brian Doyle: Will there be individual pole counting with ID of existing fiber?

Debra Hall: Towns to ask specifics to Axiom. Axiom is not doing pole to pole ID unless requested to by specific town. The point is that we do not have universal fiber. The fact that it exists on some poles is somewhat irrelevant, particularly when the fiber is not retail accessible.

Brian Doyle: Wish to know what we have, I will reach out to Mark. Thomaston was encourage to have this discussion directly with Axiom.

Target delivery of 1<sup>st</sup> round: with additional towns, end of August, start of September  
MIDC and Axiom spoke in Lincolnville: Recording of June 14<sup>th</sup> meeting on the Lincolnville webpage.

Calls with ISPs next week to discuss elements of network design: Pioneer, GWI and Axiom.

Jason Philbrook will assist/join the call.

## 7. Project Funding Updates

- a. Seed Money – Discussion. Private and public outreach  
Meeting with bond advisors  
Goal: To secure (public and private investment), approx. \$4 mill  
The First, our commercial bank partner  
Working on a comprehensive funding plan
- b. Federal guidelines for ARP funding – Discussion  
County Funding Updates  
Bob Kurek: We are having success with Waldo Commissioners  
We need the public funds to make it work; they were comfortable  
Jeremy Martin: Legal process to spend revenue  
Trying to figure the process of how to spend  
Debra Hall: Question of spending funds properly, funds to Homeless Coalition and Sheriff's Dept were tabled at Knox County Commissioners meetings  
Bob Kurek: Pushing hard and getting them to focus on broadband.  
Let's get this to unserved and underserved  
Jeremy Martin: Push through Knox County Homeless proposal  
Roadblocks at the County and State levels  
Funding steps and timetable: Q4 2021 to secure seed  
Fed ARP guidelines update – FAQ allows for funding of broadband not limited to 25/3 Mbps.
- c. ConnectME - Discussion  
Planning Grant Application filed for \$20K: Rejected, area/region designated as "already served"

Fails to recognize that we are a coalition that includes unserved/underserved.  
Fails to recognize that those locations “served” do not receive anywhere close to reliable service.

Denise Munger: Issue and bias if when scoring proposal, need to have full faith and credit of the towns involved. Skin in the game and local support should be able to be demonstrated other ways such as ballot votes and private investment.

Debra Hall: They want/demand us to have full faith and credit of the towns.

The New MCA – MIC participation in the working group and advisory committee, had our hands full against a room of corporations, private ISPs

Denise Munger: Please reach out to your representative to support municipal networks.

Steven Koltai – We need to do a better job in arguing for a significant share of public money. I want to be clear...the battle lines are being drawn between two groups. Fed>state>county>town, battles will be fought on all levels

Disadvantage against industry groups with paid staff and paid lobbyists

David and Goliath situation.

Maine is the worst: 50 out of 50 in monopolistic service areas

Tomorrow are the hearings for new MCA BOD

List of new MCA BOD, please show up at the hearings

Steven Koltai: Whatever financing plan or stack will rest on the foundation of public money

Foundational layer of the financing stack should be public

Reach out to the MCA BOD and our representatives

Demand/Ask: Get the funds to the muni models

Person closest to us: Rep Paige Zeigler needs to be contacted

Bring school district, Kendra Jo, State Reps to the County meetings.

MIC submitted written testimony to the hearings. Not to oppose individuals. And requested questions be asked.

Matt Siegel: We were ahead of the hearing to speak with Representative Vicki Doudera and Rep Seth Berry. Berry was not engaged.

Steven Koltai: Make noise that there is a substantial group behind muni model.

We need to be at the table.

MCA BOD rundown for the MIC members.

Industry heavy

Outline of BOD backgrounds

Debra Hall: We fight for public funding, and at same time need to solicit private funding.

Jordan: We are seeing a trend. Need to prepare for min contribution from State and Fed.

Debra Hall: We will keep finding and exploring all options

John Gibbons: Please present a strategic plan for MIC members and designated state reps. Debra invited John to draft one.

Debra Hall: Looking to establish a statewide Maine Municipal Broadband Association

- d. Knox County Commissioners - Review and updates status
  - June 8<sup>th</sup> Review: A solid team effort, not well received
  - Follow-up: Letter to County Commissioners, set up workshop session in August
  - Op-Ed Village Soup and Camden Herald July 7<sup>th</sup>
  - (Attachment E) Village Soup link, editorial on the subject:  
<https://knox.villagesoup.com/2021/07/08/the-time-is-now-for-broadband-expansion/>

July 13<sup>th</sup> at 2pm: Knox County Commissioners Meetings. ARP funding for homeless coalition, affordable housing, and overtime pay for Sheriff's Dept on their agenda

Jordan: In support of the efforts, moving as swiftly as possible.

Debra Hall: We responded in 24 hours to Susan Collins efforts to cut muni broadband from the pending infrastructure bill.

## 8. Maine State, Legislative Updates

Funding steps and timetable

- a. ConnectME Planning Grant - rejected
- b. Maine State legislative documents (LD)
  - Guiding/pending legislation
  - LD 1235 Bond Issue \$100,000,000 (ConnectMe Authority)
  - LD 1432, Gigabit Fund, passed, unsigned by Gov Mills
- c. LD 1484, passed, establishes Maine Connectivity Authority (MCA)
  - MIC participated over two weeks as part of MCA Working Group and Advisory Committee.
  - Meeting with State reps (Doudera and Berry) over intention vs implementation.
  - Proposed BOD stacked with pro corporate private ISP
  - (Attachment F: Proposed MCA BOD list for review)
- d. Federal: American Rescue Plan Act (ARP) funding update and strategy
  - Muni
  - County - Knox County Commissioners – shut down at June 8<sup>th</sup> meeting
  - Plus \$129 million to state
- a. Federal: American Infrastructure Plan
  - Potentially another \$100 million (as per Senator King)
  - Senator Collins opposing funds to muni broadband initiatives
  - Letter to Susan Collins (Attachment G for review)

## 9. MIC Community and Regional Updates

Individual Town Updates (3 min each). North to South:

Northport	Rockport	Owls Head	Southwestern Waldo County
Lincolnville	Rockland	Searsmont (Guest)	Western Kennebec Lakes
Camden	Thomaston	Union	
Hope	South Thomaston	Cushing	

Debra Hall: Brian update from Thomaston; signed the ILA

Josh Gerritsen: Lincolnville, leaning on BB committee how to move forward

Steven Koltai: On July 26 to talk with Lincolnville SB about funding and authorizing study; must bid competitively for \$8K; prepared the list of consultants

Donna Beninati: Sedgewick, applied for the RFI, the NTIA partnership; we were told that they appreciate our submission, looked at priorities, did not accept our proposals, but the accepted proposal from Consolidated. I am flabbergasted and over this. We are truly unserved. 5/0 rely on my hotspot. It seems like insanity to keep funding the private incumbents. We would like to join MIDC and team together. Also turned down for the planning grant.

## 10. Finance - Update

Seeking financial advisors, to create team

Creating statement of need for private and commercial investors

Meetings with financial experts, to design funding models

Hybrid model. Incl Public Finance Teams and Commercial Lending Teams

Ongoing meetings with Bangor Savings (Skip Bates, Danielle Ahern, David Holden)

Machias, need to contact them for discussion.

The First, our current banking partner

Recommend: Digital Frontiers (MBC), panel on muni utility and their funding models

[To watch Digital Frontiers](#) Part One

[To watch Digital Frontiers](#) Part Two

Looking at joint ventures and partners that might assist in revenue bonds being an earlier part of the funding model.

### **\*\*Establish Finance Committee**

With feedback and models from above financial institutions. Seeking assistance here.

Everyone has a responsibility to help out.

## 11. MarComm Committee: Branding, Marketing and Communications

Josh Gerritsen, Steven Koltai, Cliff Dasco, Matt Siegel, Ann Frenning Kossuth. Advisors: Lisa Sheprow, Lynne Canavan, Craig Currie

MarComm has been on hold.

ARP (State and Fed) lobbying matters have taken priority

Getting sample materials from around the country

To bring to the table

Will reconvene the MarComm

Upcoming: Pre-subscription /ascertain take rate – stats, next drive, to design based on other models, cull information and find best method.

Public outreach: Let's Connect campaign

Media creation

"Cheaper, faster, better...no taxes"

Social Media: Facebook Midcoast Internet page

<https://www.facebook.com/Midcoast-Internet-102078928721044>

Earned Media Resources: Courier Dan, Susan; Free Press; Bangor Daily News Lauren

Now available:

MI Two pages, FAQ one sheets, PPT slide pack for presentations

\*\*Committee seeks new members and a committee chair

**12. New business** – Hope update: Melissa Hall, LCI organized a launch meeting. Project started July 1<sup>st</sup>. Set up a list of expectations. Pushing for updates on the CARES. In touch with LCI constantly...working with LCI engineers to work out inaccuracies. Strategy: Give as much support as we can.

Sharyn Pohlman, coming to Hope Select Board meeting in July.

**13. Adjournment – Action item** Motion to Adjourn: Donna Beninati, 2<sup>nd</sup> Matt Siegel.  
Pass unanimously.