

Midcoast Internet Coalition

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

August 11th, 2021, 5:00 p.m.

Zoom:

Minutes

- **Call to Order**

Participants:

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

Representatives:

Camden: Marc Ratner (SB), Jeremy Martin

Cushing: Craig Currie (SB)

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

Lincolntonville: Jordan Barnett-Parker (SB)

Northport: N/A

Owls Head: N/A

Peninsula Group: Donna Beninati, John Czuj

Rockland: Ben Dorr (City Council)

Rockport: Denise Munger (SB)

Searsmont: Peter Milinazzo (SB)

South Thomaston: Cliff Dacso, Lynne Canavan, Anne Just

Southwestern Waldo County: Bob Kurak (SB)

St George: N/A

Thomaston: Zel Bowman-LeBerge (SB)

Union: John Gibbons

Vinalhaven: N/A

Camden National Bank: N/A

Knox County: N/A

Other Invited Guests: (August 2021)

Brooksville: N/A

Western Kennebec Lakes: N/A

Wiscasset/Lincoln County Broadband: Carla Dickstein

- **Action Item – Motion to Approve July 14th, 2021 Minutes –**

Motion to accept: Jeremy Martin, 2nd Cliff Dacso. Passed unanimously.

- **Report by Leadership Team–**

- Shifting regional strategy: Facing the fiber vs fiber from Otelco, Core Four build
- Fund in phases

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- Designing a “pathway” project to unserved and underserved
- Work on many levels: Fed lobbying, state legislation and policy implementation, county appeal for ARP funding
- Statewide: As a resource, partner, and development corporation
- Welcome other towns and their participation, incl Lincoln County

- **MIDC, Regional Utility – Update and discussion Items**
 - Camden, Rockport signed on as charter municipalities.
 - Thomaston and Rockland updates. Rockland voted on Monday August 9th to join the ILA
 - Ben Dorr: Unanimous vote, hoping for success
 - Thomaston voted to join the utility
 - Filed for DUNS #, SAM # for gov’t funding, now registered
 - 501(c)4 allows for lobbying, which we do
 - Setting up an affiliate entity, 501(c)3, for private tax exempt donations
 - Bank account with The First, mailing address is Town of Rockport
 - Funded by \$20,000 from Rockport, same from Camden
 - Rockport will do the accounting
 - Cost \$4000-5000 on the Trios System
 - Rockport has paid the set up legal fees.
 - Camden covered Bill Kelly charges to date.

- **Axiom Technologies planning study / network design – Discussion**
 - AXIOM, Phase One – underway, initial payments made directly to Axiom from participating towns. Does not pass through utility
 - Report/study of network design, rough costs, pro-forma financial statements, revised strategic plan in the face of Otelco.
 - Axiom providing a more detailed engineer study
 - John Gibbons, Union believes they are off to a good start with Axiom
 - Craig Currie, meet with Cushing, paid Axiom this week. Waiting on legal regarding ILA.
 - Issues discussed with Axiom: Underground conduit, ditch witch option, CO location options, special cases for FFTP

- **Project Funding – Updates and discussion**
 - a. Seed Money Strategies:
 - Towns considering placing ARPA money to the utility project, incl Rockport
 - Not a requirement
 - We encourage and invite others to contribute
 - Also Rockport considering contributing the 1.5 mil build as an asset to the utility
 - Being addressed August 24th at Rockport SB
 - Conversations ongoing with private investors and fundraisers
 - Speaking to Camden Rotary on Aug 17th

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- b. Knox County: Applying for Knox County ARPA grant due Aug 31st:
- Application went going out Aug 13th, due Aug 31st
 - Discussion not to have MIDC apply directly
 - Looking at strategy of towns going out and applying to Knox County
 - Ex build out Rockport first, with support of other towns
 - John Gibbons: Why not MIDC?
Debra Hall: Knox County views MIC and MIDC as a lobbying group instead of a coalition and regional utility of towns with the latter being form as a unit of government under Maine law. Better to have town apply.
 - Craig Currie: A referendum for broadband?
DH: Town Manager and Legal Counsel said chances of success would be slim
 - Waldo County: \$20K to each town, pro-active
Jordan: They rolled back, it would be nice if you use it for broadband
Got watered down. No instruction how to use it/
 - Bob Kurek: I was at the Waldo Comm meeting. Thankful for \$20K per town but insufficient. We need greater public funding. We have been pushing. Brought in Sen Curry and Kenra Jo Grindle from Island Inst. Just gonna give each town 20K and let towns decide how they want to spend it. I was worried as Budget Comm member, no oversight.
Other expenditures reportedly being considered by Waldo County: The Garden: For residents of the prison, \$1.25 mill for new equipment for the communications center. \$1.6 mill to build facilities. And build a food storage facility.
Boilers to replace, courthouse upgrades
Q: ARPA qualified?
Will get legal to advice on how to spend
Never worked so hard for so little
Can review recordings
Bob Kurek: Treating the ARPA funds like a grant, budget comm not involved
Public input has come after decisions made
Carla Dickstein: Lincoln Cty doing meetings with stakeholders
We are so far behind, it would be start-up money/funding
A huge one-time lift that can benefit so many
Affordable housing, question whether eligible
No examples in Maine to use.
Issue: through the budget committee as revenue
 - Zel: if Thomaston applies for funds, as member of the four towns? Or independently as Thomaston?
Debra Hall: Position that the towns will have better success. Language in charter supports serving the towns.
Having towns go directly has merit.
Will have a meeting of the four towns to decide and agree on a plan re: Knox County applications

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Matt Siegel: A Pathway Project, part of a regional, phase one of a greater regional project

Get everyone together to have a unified strategy

- c. EDA Grant application for ARPA Funds
 - MCEDD conversation with EDA includes use of ARPA funds for broadband
 - Keen to contribute to broadband for econ dev and jobs
 - Usual match of 50%, in this case 80% from EDA
 - Submit on a rolling basis
 - March 2022, final for Sept 2022 deadline
 - Get it in Fall 2022, summary and financial info pass along
 - 20% seed money needed
 - Plus, the new infrastructure bill
 - Good news about EDA/EAA grants: Only muni and non-profits
- **Maine State -- Updates and discussion**
 - a. MCA BOD nominated and approved
 - Tim Schneider is the Chair
 - b. Upcoming discussion with Maine Municipal Bond Bank
- **MIC Community and Regional - Updates**
 - Town reports:
 - Hope (progress report of LCI build out)**
 - Melissa: A launch meeting, Hope/Appleton/LCI got everyone to the table
 - Hope SB Sarah + 4 comm members
 - Go over fact sheet and the project
 - People have not read
 - 2-year project. Supposed to start July 1st. No start date.
 - Anticipate first hook-ups end of Sept.
 - Hope SB OK, chugging along
 - South Thomaston (update)**
 - Cliff Dacso, SB met last night
 - Warrant town voted to have SB pass funds to Axiom study
 - ILA joining under discussion
 - Union (meeting with MIDC and Axiom)**
 - John Gibbons, to have the ILA on Nov ballot
 - How to generate support and excitement
 - Union historical society
 - Peninsula**
 - Donna, NDRC application
 - Applied for a small grant, rejected
 - Learned: Do need secured funds
 - Charlotte (EDA) see more business involvement is essential

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Could not compete with a larger ask

- **Finance – Update**

Still seeking financial advisors, to create team

Meetings with financial experts, to design funding models

- **New business**

25/3 issue, addressed in Treasury FAQ in questions 6.8 to 6.11

Funds can be used to access underserved or if econ necessary to reach 25/3

Jeremy Martin: Reminder, EDA – business support is critical

Carla: Concern about workers not having fiber, must be part of discussion

Covid-19: If Covid-19 happens again, how this project will benefit Maine residents (resiliency)

- **Adjournment – Action item**

Adjourn at 6:09pm

Motion to Adjourn: Jeremy Martin, 2nd by Melissa Hall. Unanimous.

Please note: Future / Regular Meetings for 2021

The group set future meetings for the second Wednesday of each month at 5 p.m. as follows:

Sept 8th Oct 13th Nov 10th Dec 8th