

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
September 8th, 2021, 5:00 p.m.
Zoom Meeting
Minutes**

1. Call to Order

Participants:

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

Representatives:

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

Cushing: Craig Currie (SB)

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

Lincolntonville: Josh Gerritsen (SB), Jordan Barnett-Parker (SB), Steven Koltai (BB)

Owls Head: Kim Slawson

Rockland: Ben Dorr (City Council)

Rockport: Denise Munger (SB)

South Thomaston: Walter Reitz (SB rep)

Thomaston: Brian Doyle

Union: John Gibbons

Invited Guests: (September 2021)

Southwestern Waldo County: Bob Kurak (SB)

St George: Jeff Boulet(BB)

2. Action Item – Motion to Approve August 11th, 2021 Minutes

Motion to approve August 11th, 2021 minutes. Motion made by Jeremy Martin and 2nd.
Unanimous approval.

3. Report by Leadership Team

- Josh Gerritsen has added the Midcoast Internet minutes and agendas to the website
- Shifting regional strategy: Facing the fiber vs fiber reality from Otelco in Camden, Rockland, and Thomaston
- Four towns – (Camden, Rockland and Thomaston) in support of Rockport application to Knox County – The Rockport Broadband Pathway Project, application submitted by August 31 deadline for the amount of \$750,000

Marc Ratner: Otelco skipping Rockport. Will MIDC overbuild?

Debra Hall: We will see the take rates in Phase One, then determine. Difficult to go head-to-head with another fiber provider. Rockport sensible 1st project area.

Marc R: Important to bring service to the region.

Jordan Barnett-Parker: Opinion, MIDC should go toe-to-toe with Otelco

Debra H: Otelco going hard on competitive pricing. We will ask the region to consider MIDC as a grassroots effort, not only as a product.

- MIDC designing a Rockport first phase “pathway” project to unserved and underserved
- EDA grant application underway, calls and meeting with MCEDD
- Cap on projects is \$5 million
- While deadline is March for Sept distributions it is a rolling grant application process
- Need to expand the business letters
- ADD Anchor institutions: schools, hospital, muni

4. MIDC Regional Utility – Update and discussion Items

- Camden, Rockport signed on as charter municipalities.
- Have set up legal documents and bank accounts
- First BOD meeting (not yet scheduled) will be for the inclusion of Thomaston and Rockland pending Rockland 9-13-21 City Council meeting

5. Axiom Technologies planning study / network design – Discussion

- AXIOM, Phase One – underway, initial payments made directly to Axiom from participating towns
- Initial Rockport build and expense numbers have been provided for the Knox County grant
- Next: Projected costs for the Core Four Towns, individually and together as MIDC
- Rockport projected build cost approx \$3.4 million
- End of September we anticipate first data for preliminary review/revision for Rockport, again preliminary numbers used for Knox County ARPA application
- \$950K represents material costs for The Rockport Broadband Pathway Project build
- Need to have those funds in hand to order fiber, and to get on a build schedule
- Report/study of network design, rough costs, pro-forma financial statement outstanding and needed for the upcoming EDA/EAA grant application

6. Project Funding – Updates and discussion

- Seed Money Strategies (Rockport muni funds, Knox County, EDA regional grant, private donations work underway)
- Rockport committed 2021 ARPA funds to the effort, ~ \$177,000
- Seeking State and Fed
- Private donors have been approached, “local champions”
- Forming 501c3 for contributions to be tax exempt

John Gibbons: re \$950K, is that the material costs for 1 or 4 towns?

DH: Materials for just one town, Rockport

JG: When will study be ready for other smaller towns? End of Aug? End of Sept?

DH: End of September is the target, but additional towns add to the burden of work;

Hawkeye Construction providing more details reports for the four towns

For the actual, construction RFP will be sent out

7. MIC Community and Regional – Updates

MIC member towns and guests are asked to update the MIC on their broadband activities.

- Bob Kurek (SWCBC), Palermo. Finalized RFP for feasibility study; seeking professional group to take on the study. We would like each of the 5 towns to use their ARPA Waldo County money to pay for the study. Doing info sessions with each town: Special town meeting with Montville, upcoming Freedom on the 18th, Palermo, Searsmont Sept 21, Liberty Sept 30
- Josh Gerritsen, Lincolnville. LBBC drafting a RFP for study. Discussion on Monday, approval pending
- Craig Currie, Cushing. Cushing SB putting the utility and the ILA to a vote. Will go through with the select board. May wait for the study for Axiom before moving forward. But we will be going to a vote. Put in a grant app to Knox County, to match town ARPA muni money with Knox County contribution. POV: Waldo County 20K to each town may not be legal. Bob Kurek: We have our 20K in the bank. Andy Hart acknowledged receipt of Cushing Knox County application. Broadband as a fairness question, equity for the whole county.
- Debra Hall: The rules for ARPA money for **state** funds not out at this point. Question of how many applications were submitted to Knox County? Would like them to be posted publicly. Point of clarification: The MIDC can and would provide service throughout the region.
- Jeff Boulet, St. George. On behalf of the town select board. Head of St George BB Committee. Working on getting high speed broadband to 200 residents. Rec'd Connect Maine award to build last mile to 200 homes. Spectrum pulled out of the agreement. They did not want to comply with reporting requirements of the grant. Spectrum will self-fund to installations. A funding gap exists. Trying to find the terms and conditions of the contractual agreement with Spectrum. We know it will be coaxial cable; agreement terms are nebulous.
- Debra Hall: What is the budget of the St George project?
- John Boulet: Spectrum will put up \$560K, St George will contribute \$65K -- 10K from Town, 10K from grants. \$45K gap, seeking ARPA funds to fill the funding gap. Trying to avoid the Boothbay situation.
- John Gibbons, Union. Waiting anxiously for the feasibility report. Would like a schedule. In a difficult situation with LCI and Spectrum in our town. Planning to send a letter in support of the Rockport application.
- About timing, Debra Hall: With \$750K from Knox County ARPA and \$177K from Rockport ARPA in the bank, we could get on a build schedule. At this time, we face a 6-month backlog to receive materials, and then 3-4 months to build the

network. Need seed money to launch project, assuming that we have secured the remaining funds for the Phase One Pathway.

- Brian Doyle, Thomaston. Waiting for the Axiom report.
- Debra Hall: Reminder, the designated ARPA muni money must go to that town.
- Walter Reitz, South Thomaston. We have as Abe Lincoln would say “a case of the slows.” Share a town attorney with Cushing. Their funding has been tied directly to ARPA funds being made available. Being “sticklers” regarding potential disbursements.

8. New business / Adjournment

- Debra Hall: Two biggest issues that we are addressing: Private donation solicitation; the EDA/EAA grant submission. Both ASAP
- Please support, if you have businesses that could write a letter of support that targets economic development, creating jobs with the fiber network
- Specifics are essential
- Mid-Coast School of Technology and the Fiber Broadband Association, working with us to develop training courses for fiber technicians; both classroom and intern programs; first session may be as early as January 2022
- Please send a note to Knox County, requesting transparency
- Steven Koltai, any word on the MCA? Tom Schneider as BOD Chair. Any news?
- Debra Hall: No news. We have written to Tim. Encouraged him to follow certain procedures. They are not in line with basic operations. Nothing happening fast there. Vermont is light years ahead of what Maine is doing.
- Denise Munger: Things were supposed to happen fast. Vermont has weekly meetings. MCA can't manage to have one.

Meeting adjourned.

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:
Oct 13th Nov 10th Dec 8th