



**Bristol Broadband Committee
MINUTES
Bristol Town Office, February 27th, 2020**

*Members Present: Phil Congdon (Chair); Helen Costello; Mike Sirois
Also present: Chris Hall (Town Administrator), Evan Houk (Lincoln County News)*

Chair Phil Congdon called the meeting to order at 7.05 pm. There being no quorum, no votes were taken.

Hall asked the members present to sign their Oath of Office as members of the Committee, and to read and sign the Town's Code of Conduct for officials.

Congdon led a discussion of whether Bristol should apply for a ConnectME Planning Grant, or move directly to apply for an Infrastructure Grant for implementation of fiber expansion. Concern was expressed that, regardless of the quality of the information that could be assembled for a grant, ConnectME might not be willing to make an Infrastructure Grant without the preliminary Planning Grant having been awarded and its work completed. This could imply a delay of one to two years to complete the planning process. A related question is who should write the Infrastructure Grant: Tidewater appear to be doing that in towns where they are seeking grant support for expansion, so that the use of a Planning Grant to hire a consultant for research and grant-writing would be unnecessary. Hall agreed to inquire directly to the ConnectME staff, as well as to Tidewater Telecom, the Lincoln County Regional Planning Commission and the Island Institute.

Congdon also asked if USDA grant funding should be sought, in addition to ConnectME money. Hall was uncertain whether Bristol could qualify, given our valuation and demographic profile, but will also inquire about this.

Congdon presented his calculation of Spectrum coverage in Bristol, based on their payment of franchise fees to the Town. Using their introductory offer pricing, an upper limit of around 1,500 customers are being serviced. If higher average fees are being charged, the number of customers would be reduced in proportion. This compares with around 3,000 residential properties (seasonal and year round) in Bristol, suggesting a significant unserved market. However given Spectrum's policy of not sharing information, it will be necessary to refine this estimate by physical observation of Spectrum cables along Bristol roads. This task should be completed by a combination of volunteers and the Town's Highway Department, covering approximately 100 miles of public and private roads in Bristol.

The Chair noted that we have been invited to Bremen's forthcoming meeting with Tidewater Telecom, at 11 am on Saturday February 29th, courtesy of Wendy Pieh, chair of their Selectboard. This promises to be an informative meeting for us, as Tidewater are reported to be going to present their Infrastructure Grant application and their plan for 100% build-out in Bremen. Sirois and Costello, both living on unserved roads adjoining the Bremen town line, indicated interest in seeing if we can 'piggyback' onto the Bremen build-out. Costello will join Congdon and Hall in attending the Bremen meeting.

There was a brief discussion of how to expand interest in Town in the Committee's activities, and get more volunteers. Congdon will prepare brief remarks for the Town Meeting on Tuesday, March 17th, and Hall will see if the Moderator will recognize him for remarks immediately after the expected mid-meeting break.

The chair felt that the Committee should meet again before the Town Meeting, and proposed the evening of Thursday, March 12th. At that time lessons learned from the Bremen meeting will be on the agenda, along with planning the visual survey of Town roads. Hall will send out notice of both the Bremen and the next Broadband Committee meeting to members. He will ask Ricky Levine and Alex Diamond, who had attended the meeting on January 23rd, to officially join the Committee.

Meeting adjourned at 8.10 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Chris Hall
Town Administrator