



**Bristol Broadband Committee  
MINUTES  
Bristol Town Office, December 17<sup>th</sup>, 2019**

*Members Present:*

*Also Present: Chad Hanna (Chair, Board of Selectmen); Chris Hall (Town Administrator); Candy Congdon; Christa Thorpe and Ernie Carroll (Bremen Broadband Committee)*

The meeting was called to order by Chad Hanna at 7:04 pm, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

Members and guests introduced themselves before electing a Chair and Vice-Chair for the Committee. Each person indicated where in Bristol they lived, and what internet access they had.

Phil Congdon was nominated by Tom Dykstra and seconded by Mike Sirois for the position of Chair. There being no other nominations, Phil Congdon was elected unanimously.

The Chair then called for nominations for Vice Chair. Helen Costello was nominated by Mike Sirois and seconded by Dorothy King. There being no other nominations, Helen Costello was elected unanimously.

Hall outlined some of the factors that had led to the appointment of the Committee by the Selectmen. A number of residents had contacted the Town Office complaining about the lack of adequate cell phone and/or fiber broadband in parts of the Town. In addition, Tidewater Telecom had approached the Town and made a presentation to the Selectmen outlining the likely costs and funding options for covering all of the Town's roads with fiber. Thirdly, the Lincoln County Regional Planning Commission has been active in promoting a number of initiatives to expand broadband in towns throughout the county, and had held a well-attended informational meeting in Damariscotta in October.

In Hall's estimation, two-thirds of residences in the Town are on roads served by Spectrum cable, and about a quarter of the Town has Tidewater fiber. In addition, residences within perhaps a mile radius of the Tidewater switches in Bristol Mills and Round Pond have ADSL (Asymmetric Digital Subscriber Line) service available which, while offering less speed than fiber, still offers adequate capacity for most internet uses.

## DRAFT

Hall stated that the arguments he had heard from residents and others for promoting universal access are four:

- (i) The increasing use of the internet for medical services ('telemedicine'), including doctors' consultations, heart monitoring, etc.
- (ii) The expectation that school students must use the internet for research for homework.
- (iii) The need for broadband for telecommuting and home businesses.
- (iv) The growing resistance of house buyers to buy where there is poor internet service, thus depressing some home values.

The Chair described the process by which he has produced lists of residential addresses, covering 100% of the Town's public and private roads. This information could be valuable to Tidewater Telecom or another infrastructure provider, but Hanna cautioned against releasing names with the list.

The Committee agreed that a first priority for work would be to quantify the need – to confirm which addresses have access to Spectrum, Tidewater fiber, both or none. A related task would be to identify those areas in Town with poor or no cell phone reception, including identifying the carrier(s) concerned.

Christa Thorpe and Ernie Carroll, from the Bremen Broadband Committee, outlined where they are with organizing their work. (Christa Thorpe is also a community development officer working on Broadband for the Island Institute, and has experience in a number of coastal towns in expanding broadband.) Bremen received a formal proposal from Tidewater on November 25<sup>th</sup>, proposing a build-out of fiber to the premise (FTTP) on 23 miles of Bremen roads not yet served by broadband. A portion of the funding for Tidewater's proposed build is hoped to come from a ConnectME grant from the state. There was discussion as to whether Bristol could piggy-back onto Bremen's ConnectME grant, to cover roads adjoining Bremen without broadband service, but the application deadline of March 2020 makes this appear unlikely.

Thorpe indicated that they had considered asking other, competing providers but the reality is that only Tidewater (in Bremen), as the telephone ILEC (Incumbent Local Exchange Carrier), has the existing poles infrastructure that would allow economic build-out of fiber. Bristol differs from Bremen in having two incumbents, Tidewater and Spectrum.

She gave members of the Committee copies of a document authored by the Island Institute, "Accessing Broadband in Your Community Through the Community-Driven Broadband Process." She also handed out copies of the survey form being used in Bremen, based on one developed by the Lincoln County Regional Planning Commission (LCRPC) and one by the town of Jefferson.

She also discussed the pros and cons of seeking planning grants, from bodies such as LCRPC, the Island Institute and others. This might be appropriate for funding an all-homes mailing of a survey.

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Bremen will be holding a public discussion forum in January, and once scheduled, she will send the Bristol Committee an invitation to it.

There was discussion of who should be invited to come to future meetings of the Committee to gain information about (i) providers' existing coverage and future plans, and (ii) how other Towns have funded broadband expansion. It was agreed that Hall should invite:

- Randal Manning and Alan Hinsey, of Tidewater Telecom;
- Mary Ellen Barnes, of LCRPC;
- Mark Ouellette of Axiom Technologies;
- (possibly) Brian Lippold of Casco Bay Advisors.

It was agreed that for the time being, the Committee should plan to meet monthly; that Tuesday nights work for the members present; and that the next meeting will be at 7 pm on Tuesday, January 14<sup>th</sup>.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 8.29 pm.

Respectfully submitted,  
Chris Hall  
Town Administrator