

Sebago Broadband Committee Minutes

3.4.21

Attendees:

Michele Bukoveckas, Phil Lowe, Mia Purcell, Joe McMahon, Daniel Bowe, Eric Hall, Bill Exley, Ann Farley, Jerry Holt, Allen Crabtree

Guests:

Mia Purcell, Danielle Taylor

Guest Speaker Presentation, Mia Purcell:

The Island Institute's Community Broadband Initiative is a great place to start and lists examples from other communities. These are some key beginning steps: community engagement, surveys, and speed tests (this process takes time). The survey results will inform where citizens have service and to what degree, how much they care about cost, reliability, or achieving universal coverage. The Connect ME Authority uses speed test data to measure if an address is served or not, which is useful when applying for a grant.

When making a survey, the committee should combine a link to the speed test within the survey. The survey will help bring additional people into the process, get the word out, motivate citizens to be passionate about broadband, and allow the committee to engage with the information from the survey. Then the committee can develop a goal for what you want to do. For example, how do you deal with 25% of the town being underserved and spread out?

The Connect ME Authority awards points for working with other towns. Their underserved areas might be next to yours.

Andrew asked if there is the opportunity for a more coordinated approach with Internet Service Providers (ISPs) and for funding broadband projects. Is there an example of a town starting at the baseline?

Mia stated that the Mahoosuc area applied for a Connect Maine planning grant and received a grant two years ago. They worked with Axiom, but missed parts of community engagement. There were 27 towns to organize. The broadband bootcamp started with community engagement. Communities formed a committee to do the legwork. In Mahoosic, Mia asked people already involved in the broadband process to invite people they thought would be interested in the committee. They sent out the survey by paper to fulltime residents. Residents joined the committee after seeing the survey. They have a 10 member committee consisting of an IT director from a school board, corporate retirees, residents with bad service, Town manager, and a select person from different town. The committee took the lead on making presentations to residents and towns. Mia helped with speed test and survey results. Mahoosic developed a goal: universal, reliable, affordable, future ready service. All the towns involved had a leader representative to report back and make votes. The committee agreed to \$2,500 per town for a consultant to map the region. ISPs won't release this information.

Questions for Mia:

Daniel asked how they should work on action items. Mia said collaboration is crucial and information will help you talk with ISPs. A speed test could show people are overpaying for service. Jerry asked about 25/3. Mia stated this is the current federal and state definition for high-speed broadband (25 Mbps download/3 Mbps upload). Anything below is underserved and this number could change. Michelle asked about Vetro Fiber. Mia and Daniel stated that it is a GIS mapping company that will show the town what service currently exists. Jerry asked for the target percent of year round residents in surveys and speed tests. Mia stated at least 20%. Harrison has a weekly newsletter and follow-up card. Mahoosic school district sent out information to parents. Use all town connections (library) and send a paper copy too.

Outreach Check-in:

Michele stated that the speed test is on the town's website. Avery stated that they haven't sent the test through the school. Michele said she'll look into accessing the Town's email list and mentioned a snail mailer. Allen and Phil will work on a postcard to send out. Dan mentioned the Sebago Community Facebook group. Town hall should be the central communications point. Avery will pass along information of companies that can mail out survey with a prepaid envelope to citizens. Kirsten asked about citizens without service. Avery said there would be a question on the paper survey. Allen and Phil will create a survey. Kirsten stated they should have a dedicated email address to receive the survey results from people. Michele will see if CivicPlus allows another email address. Phil mentioned interest in a consultant to map Sebago. Phil stated a desire to meet every two weeks.

Next meeting: March 18th, 2021 1:30PM