

Communication and Technologies Committee
April 26, 2021
Meeting Minutes

I. CALL TO ORDER: Meeting called to order at 3:32 p.m. In attendance were Committee members George Grohs, Matt Hochman, Lucas Callado, and Todd Edgar. Staff present was Steve Cornell. Ninah Gile joined to pose questions about the fiber project on behalf of the MDIslander.

II. PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD: Ninah Gile from the Mount Desert Islander joined via Zoom to gather some information about the fiber project. The following project purpose and status was provided during the discussion.

The town fiber network project has been designed, estimated, and accepted as part of the budget. That budget now goes to the June town meeting for approval. If approved, the fiber project can begin once money is obligated.

The reason for building the fiber network is to provide essential connectivity between town facilities. Currently, this is accomplished using fiber, maintained by the town but owned by Spectrum, through a franchise agreement. The nature of that agreement is changing and will begin to cost the town \$45,000 a year. Therefore, the town can build and maintain its own fiber network for less than Spectrum will charge. Funds that have been set aside in preparation for the franchise fee could be made permanent and used to provide resources to manage the network.

Mount Desert is running fiber in close proximity to the high school. This creates an opportunity to connect the two towns, which will be particularly useful due to the shared police force. The high school will be a user and provide funds for fiber network maintenance.

The fiber network will also create opportunities for third-party operators to lease the fiber that could then be used to provide services to residents. Also, businesses could lease access to the fiber to provide locations between their locations or offer other services to their customers. To be clear, the town is not trying to become an Internet service provider. This is, however, a way to increase access to residents while generating revenue for maintenance of the network.

If approved, next steps will include “ride outs” to affirm all necessary work is accounted for in the plan.

Chairperson George Grohs offered up the committee to review any of the technical aspects of the article Ninah is writing, if needed.

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES: The minutes of the Communications and Technologies Committee on March 15, 2021, were unanimously approved.

IV. ADOPTION OF AGENDA: The agenda was unanimously approved as posted.

V. REGULAR BUSINESS:

A. Discuss warrant approval and general update for fiber optic build

The Town meeting will be on June 1, 2021, at 6 p.m.

The committee identified the need to learn more about:

- businesses interested in accessing fiber network
- underserved residents who could potentially benefit from the fiber network
- other opportunities that could be created by the fiber network.

Ideas for communicating with these audiences included a panel discussion, Polco survey, invitations for direct contact with the committee (for questions or additional information), a task force, and development of fiber project information for the town website.

The committee will start with an FAQ for residents on the town website in advance of the June town meeting.

VI. OTHER BUSINESS: The next meeting of the CTC will be on Tuesday, May 11, 2021, at 3:30 p.m.

VII. COMMITTEE COMMENTS AND REQUESTS FOR FUTURE AGENDAS: No comments or requests for future agenda items were made.

VIII. ADJOURN: At 4:29 pm, the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted by Todd Edgar, Secretary, on May 8, 2021.
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