

Northport Broadband Internet Committee
Meeting minutes -- February 3, 2022

Present (in person and via Zoom): Ann Frenning Kossuth, Karl Beiser, Bill Frysinger, Julian Sheffield, James Kossuth, Absent: Brady Brim-DeForest.

Guests: Sean Byrne, and Derek Gagnon of GWI; Mark Ouellette of Axiom

The meeting was called to order at 5:01pm.

Sean reported on what he has learned since gaining access to the ConnectMaine infrastructure grant application portal...

- There are still some ambiguities and questions regarding ConnectMaine application evaluation criteria. He is waiting for responses to several requests for clarification that he has submitted to ConnectMaine staff.
- (Mark Ouellette concurred and summarized the current confusion and uncertainty regarding the new application process and evaluation criteria as “a real mess”.
- It appears that submitting a proposal to cover all remaining addresses in Northport makes the most sense. There seems to be no advantage in terms of scoring criteria to isolating the “most” unserved. However sliced and diced, any proposal for Northport will end up in “Priority Group 3”.
- ConnectMaine maps of Unserved (below 25 Mbps down and 3 Mbps up), Underserved (less than 50/10 Mbps and Served (greater than 100/100 Mbps) appear to be inaccurate in some areas. However, it is not possible to dispute these designations in the current application. “While there may be inaccuracies, all applications have to work with the same maps,” or similar, is the standard response from ConnectMaine on this issue.
- There seems to be some discrepancy in the number of locations currently not part of GWI’s first build. Axiom estimated about 386 addresses. GWI, using the ConnectMaine maps, thinks there are more like 800.
- Given the amount of effort put into developing this new grant evaluation approach, it wouldn’t be surprising if subsequent funding opportunities under the Maine Connectivity Authority umbrella look a lot like this round.

Members of the NBIC voiced satisfaction that the grant approach will be for the remaining locations in Northport, rather than for a piecemeal subset of locations.

James described the content of the final report to ConnectMaine based on receipt of the \$2500 planning grant in January, 2021. He will include reference to the intention of NBIC to publicize new broadband connectivity options to residents as they become available, and to take full advantage of the EBB (Emergency Broadband Benefits) program. As for public computing/internet access, the Belfast Free Library’s equipment and connectivity is conveniently near and open at no cost to all Northport residents.

After some discussion, a tentative time line was agreed on:

- Feb 10 NBIC meets with GWI staff to decide on proposal of Select Board
- Feb 14 Select Board considers NBIC/GWI proposal for allocation of funds in support of GWI grant
- Feb 26 Town meeting to consider/approve allocation of funds
- ASAP thereafter, GWI submits grant application to ConnectMaine.

Review of minutes from the Jan 11 and Jan 20 meetings was postponed due to problems some folks had in getting the file attachments to open properly. Karl said he would distribute those as PDFs prior to the next meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:22pm.