

John Lawrence, Co-Chairman
Waldoboro Communications Technology Committee

March 6, 2017

To: Senator: David Woodsome, Committee Chairman

Re: Governor's Budget for Broadband Internet Development under DECD

I'm here today due to the potential changes to the future of the ConnectME Authority. This could interrupt my town and other towns with formulated infrastructure plans ready for grant application, which are based upon the Authority's latest approved Triennial Plan. At that time our town set forth to position Waldoboro to recover from a grant provider who failed to give coverage to the unserved areas.

After this failure with the Round 4 provider, I was appointed by the Waldoboro Select Board to direct a more suitable outcome. They asked me to do this because of my 45 plus years of engineering experience in broadband Internet development, most of which included my own business in Silicon Valley. I have designed and built out systems with fiber, cable and wireless infrastructure in campus and uncovered rural regions.

Over the past few years, we formed a communications committee, which interviewed provider prospects and discovered how to approach a grant process with the intent to fix this most unfortunate situation. We also made an accurate town map documenting existing coverage regions to determine exact unserved region details. With this map it help us find a provider matched with fiber technology meeting the 10/10 Mbps full service grant criteria.

Last year at this time, the selected service provider partner applied and were awarded a grant. In a short time they installed fiber-to-the-home over a 6-mile distance offering coverage to over 70 homes and achieved a high take rate with customers, all within the last three months of 2016. We now enjoy the great advantages of 100% reliable fiber connectivity with at least 10/10 Mbps and up to 1 Gbps with price rate including IPTV and IP phone options.

I am explaining this level of detail so those who are making the decisions to formulate the future of a Broadband Authority might completely understand how this has evolved with an extremely favorable outcome. As part of this plan we now had prepared for the fiber final grant needed to complete our town's plan and serve a region with 50 residents that remain unserved.

Please appreciate that the town of Waldoboro is not unique. Many small towns throughout Maine were left with unserved areas left out when the cable and DSL operators came through picking only the most financially advantageous areas for them. We all wish to keep going without backing up to educate a new government department to oversee our broadband authority that is already doing well with the help of our State Advocate in this challenging high tech sector. There are other towns ready with plans to

take a similar approach seeking the grants made available through the 2016 Triennial Plan process defined and approved by the ConnectME Authority. I think it's fair to say all expect the new organizational change to start with this careful consideration so we can continue moving ahead to fulfill our next steps based on the expectations already determined. The only expected addition might involve the more rural villages isolated by long distances to reach the existing Maine Fiber Company's Three Ring Binder fiber connection points. They will be challenged to compete and still be within reach of the grant expense budgets. The expense to run long haul and middle mile fiber is a greater additional challenge yet to be properly considered for the more remote FTTH grant requirements meeting the fully served Maine criteria of 10/10 Mbps.

Planning grants as stipulated in the 2016 Triennial Plan need refinement to allow a greater number of towns easily filling out a fact template form for this purpose aimed at only town demographics. The more detailed technical part can be offered by the selected provider's formal grant application thus reducing the planning cost.

Please contact me if I can offer further help.

John Lawrence, Co-Chairman,
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