

## #2...Jan 11, 2019

Happy New Year to All!

This email is going to those 237 people who indicated on the broadband survey that they would like to be kept up to date by email.

Included in this second update are:

- announcement of MCF grant award and invitation to you to participate, if your schedule permits
- rescheduling of the PUC hearing on Brooksville's land line issues
- no request for additional funding at upcoming Town Meeting
- the internet as key to Maine's economic future

### 1. Maine Community Foundation Grant

As reported in the last newsletter, the Brooksville Broadband Committee applied for a grant from the Maine Community Foundation (MCF) to assist with "digital literacy" during 2019. The grant was awarded on Dec. 5 but we didn't find out until Dec. 27, because the notice of award and the accompanying check were somehow lost in transit between Ellsworth and Brooksville! Oh well. MCF is re-issuing the check to the Town, and we are starting work.

The work involves setting up a laptop lab, and designing a series of information sessions where people, particularly seniors, interested in a particular subject can come and learn through peer-to-peer coaching by volunteers. The inexpensive, rebuilt laptops will have an up-to-date Windows operating system and will be housed at the library. We also plan for volunteers to visit home-bound seniors, accompanied by health care workers already serving those folks. This will not be a project that trouble-shoots problems with computer hardware: it will be focused only on assisting people to become comfortable and safe while using the internet in ways that will enhance their lives.

In the next few weeks we will be developing a list and schedule for various subject areas, and also a list of the peer-to-peer coaches, which is one way you may participate in the project, if you are willing. If you have a good familiarity with any internet programs of interest, such as various social media platforms, photo sharing, internet games (e.g. scrabble, word games and puzzles, or Minecraft with your kids), internet shopping, computer virus protection strategies, using Google Earth to explore the planet, or any other subject you think our residents would like to learn about, please contact me by return email. You do not need to be an expert! Just a good working familiarity with an internet activity you enjoy and are willing to share.

Also, if you or someone you know would like to be one of the people who receives friendly, patient instruction in any aspect of internet use, please send me contact information. Why, just the other day I was able to show a neighbor with over 9,000 (!) unread emails how to delete them in bulk, so as not to have to spend a week at the task, and some

strategies for keeping the inbox uncluttered. Having just recently figured this out myself, it was very satisfying to share.

## 2. PUC hearing

The December 17 hearing in Brooksville, originally scheduled so that the PUC could hear directly from residents about our problems with land line phone service, was cancelled due to a snowstorm. With the holidays fast approaching, the PUC decided to reschedule it for January. **The hearing is now rescheduled for 6:00 p.m., Thursday, January 24, 2019 at the Brooksville Town Hall, 1 Town House Road, Brooksville, Maine 04617.**

Since December, there have been press inquiries about the “10 person complaint.” Although the complaint concerned only our terrible land line service, we have filled in the reporters on the relationship between phone and internet service: the same company, the same equipment, parallel excuses for poor performance. For example, a close reading of the response to our complaint shows that Consolidated Communications blames their tardy response to phone outages in part on the work they have supposedly been doing to upgrade their DSL internet. Yet, in addition to slower-than-advertised internet speed, we know some of you have been told that you cannot get any DSL at all, because the “remote terminal” boxes don’t have any more room: they have to serve phone customers first. It’s a mess, and the fact that the full range of communication options is not under the jurisdiction of any regulatory authority is part of the problem.

## 3. No Request for additional funding at upcoming Town Meeting

There will be a report from the Broadband Committee in the Town Report. At this point, we do not envision requesting any additional funds from the Town in the 2019 budget, because we are essentially parked “on hold” while waiting for the results of GWI’s loan application. Other than working on “digital literacy”, there isn’t much we can usefully do to advance the cause until we know which way we have to go. We have expended some of the funds received from the Island Institute on the survey and mapping efforts (reported to you previously). We have requested that the balance of funds be saved and set aside for future broadband work, to be defined in 2019. If the GWI loan comes through, we will possibly recommend getting some professional/legal assistance defining a rate structure that makes high speed internet affordable for ALL our residents. If the loan does not come through, we will have to go back to the process defined in the original Island Institute grant application.

## 3. internet as key to Maine’s future economy

There are some of us who believe that better broadband holds the key to Maine’s economic future. Here is a nice video from the Maine Broadband Coalition that helps to make the case: it deserves a wider audience. <https://youtu.be/IQ6LMaPmueY>. The fact that our new Governor has appointed Heather Johnson, the director of the ConnectME Authority to the position of director of the Department of Economic and Community Development could be a positive sign.

Also a good read is the following article that appeared in the Portland Press Herald: [https://www.pressherald.com/2019/01/03/maine-voices-start-building-a-maine-future-as-americas-top-remote-workspace/?utm\\_source=Headlines&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=Daily](https://www.pressherald.com/2019/01/03/maine-voices-start-building-a-maine-future-as-americas-top-remote-workspace/?utm_source=Headlines&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Daily) Since it is a small pdf file, I'm attaching it for your convenience.(1) This article calls for a quasi-government agency to see to it that a high-speed (1 gigabit per second), fiberoptic network serves the "last mile" for all of us within 5 years. It won't happen without committed political leadership. However, with luck and a successful loan to GWI, Brooksville may beat the 5 year time frame. Stay tuned!  
(1) (not attached here)