

#23... 25 June 2021

So much is happening on the broadband front that it's hard to tell you about it without overloading your inbox. But here goes:

1. Legislation has just passed creating the Maine Connectivity Authority (MCA). This agency will have powers and funds that the previous agency, the Connect Maine Authority (CMA), was lacking. It will have \$150M to spend, with more anticipated. (That's about 10x the funding the CMA had. However, the cost of building satisfactory broadband throughout the state is estimated to be about \$600M.) While the MCA is getting organized, CMA will continue to function, to be absorbed into the new agency next year. There is a volunteer Advisory Committee (AC) that is hopefully helping the CMA to organize the MCA, and I am a part of the AC. We have had one meeting and another is scheduled this month. You can find out more and join a Forum on the MCA here:

https://www.mainebroadbandcoalition.org/forum/general-discussions/the-maine-connectivity-authority?utm_campaign=acc5fbb0-7ce1-42ba-893e-183eb998c870&utm_source=so&utm_medium=mail&cid=95e83dc7-3b1f-4252-9d18-c15bb528aaaa.

I joined the AC to look out for the interests of communities like Brooksville. We tend to be swamped by larger towns and private companies in statewide efforts like this! Also, I'm beating the drum for the creation of a Revolving Loan Fund to administer MCA funds through the Maine Municipal Bond Bank, for the sake of speed and efficiency in getting the money out & into the field. Happy to answer questions about that, or anything else about this Advisory Committee or the new Authority. If I don't know the answer, I will find it for you.

2. RFP: Blue Hill, Brooksville, Deer Isle and Penobscot have hired Mission Broadband (one of only two consulting firms in the State that don't have affiliations with private companies in the broadband business) to "vet" our RFP, develop a list of qualified firms to receive it, and help review responses. (We are lucky to have an excellently qualified review team in our Broadband Committee!) The RFP should hit the street in early July. On June 16, I briefed the Selectmen about this, and they signed the contract with Mission. A copy of my briefing will soon be on the Town broadband webpage under the title "June 16 2021 Briefing for Selectmen": <https://www.brooksvillemaine.org/index.php?sectionID=266&pageID=2600>

3. NTIA: ConnectME, the state agency (a.k.a. the CMA) has asked for information from municipalities to help in the state's application for funding under another federal program known as the "NTIA Broadband Infrastructure Program of the US Department of Commerce". (If you are interested, feel free to google it.) We plan to provide the requested info to the CMA, along with our 3 partnering municipalities, and also jointly with GWI, in some combination. It is a very long shot that we will see any funding from this program, but we are again raising our hand when asked the question "who wants help funding better broadband?"

4. Town Comp Plan: The 4-page broadband piece of the town Comprehensive Plan is finished and posted on the Town comp plan webpage for public comment. Here's the link: <https://www.brooksvillemaine.org/index.php?sectionID=266&pageID=2331>. Kudos to Kathy Bonk and Doug Cowan for staying with this project to the end.

5. Surveys: Your surveys continue to arrive in my in-box. Keep them coming! Here's the survey, again, in case you haven't sent yours in yet. Email to abbiemcmillen@mac.com

So far, the results are clearly in support of spending Town tax revenue if it's necessary to bring better broadband to Brooksville. And it might be necessary. We have tried very, very hard to avoid it, but it may be inevitable. The private sector won't build it for us without some incentives, and even if we go with a public ownership option, state grants will almost surely be requiring matching funds.

Dear Brooksville Resident or Landowner:

The Brooksville Broadband Committee did an internet survey of the town in 2018. Since then, many things have changed. The pandemic has created a need for better broadband nationwide, and federal and state funding to make that happen is very much in the news. We would like your input at this critical time, to update our survey and find out your current opinions. Thank you for participating! By sending this survey back as an email attachment, you will save the Town approximately \$1.00 in printing and postage costs! THANK YOU!

Your Name _____

Address _____

email and/or phone _____

Are you a: Full time resident of Brooksville
 Part time resident of Brooksville
 Own land but don't live there
 Own a house that I rent to others

Address of Brooksville house (if other than above) _____

Do you have internet at that address? Y ___ N ___

If No, would you like to? _____

If yes, what company provides your internet? _____

Are you happy with your current internet service in Brooksville? ___ or unhappy? ___

Comments:

If high speed reliable internet were available in Brooksville, what is the maximum \$/month you would be willing to pay? \$26-50

\$51-75

\$76-100

more than \$100

Have you done an internet speed test at your Brooksville address recently? Y N
(to do, go to mainebroadbandcoalition.org and touch "run speed test")

If yes, can you please share the results? Download speed _____ Upload speed _____

Would you like to be kept up to date with information about broadband developments in Brooksville?

Y N (If yes, please be sure you have filled in your email address above)

Do you think the Town should spend tax dollars to improve internet in Brooksville? Y N

Comments:

Do you have a friend or family member in Brooksville who might appreciate a little help learning how to use a computer or the internet? Yes? If you checked this box and we have your email, we will be in touch.

Is there anything else you would like to tell us about your internet experience in Brooksville?