

**Broadband News #61**  
**20 October 2023**

It's been a long time since we connected. But I hope you are now all hooked up and happy with a bright, shiny new internet service! I haven't heard any complaints for at least a week, so I have to assume that all the bugs have been fixed, at least until a winter storm takes out those little wires festooning the poles.

Here is a cartoon I like, from Funny times. Of course, one can hope that people will enjoy each others' company on the upcoming holidays, and put aside their devices! But I AM giving thanks, because I just finished a 60 page, 50 MB yearbook file for my 63rd high school class reunion, and it would not have been possible to send it to the printer in Portland without the WiFi that I now have. I would have had to drive it there!



Brooksville leads the pack in Fidium adoption (see table below, from Butler Smythe). However, our sister towns with no wired service except DSL are not far behind! (See the two columns, with headings % and DSL Only.) I am unsure why there is a Fidium column with almost all 100% entries, but I think it means that 100% of the customers in that town *could* take the service, and the % column (the first column) is the % of the possible customers who *have* taken the service. It's good to know ALL of Brooksville's customers are eligible, but honestly, I wonder about that, considering Nautilus Island, the end of Norumbega Road, etc. Those customers can contact me and tell me what their status is with Fidium. I suppose Fidium can always say that they *COULD* be customers if they were willing to pay for the trunk line. I think the Premium Choice column is only there for completeness, because of that small demonstration project on Newbury Neck. Why all Orland customers aren't eligible is unknown to me.

**Fidium (Rough!) Take Rates (10/20/2023)**

Town	%	Spectrum	DSL Only	FIDIUM	Premium Choice
Blue Hill	30%	Partial		100%	
Castine	11%	Partial		100%	
Brooksville	47%		Yes	100%	
Deer Isle	28%	Partial		100%	
Sedgwick	44%		Yes	100%	
Penobscot	44%		Yes	100%	
Brooklin	43%		Yes	100%	
Stonington	29%	Partial		100%	
Surry		Partial		Partial	Partial
Orland		Partial		Partial	

So, since I'll be off for a few days attending that reunion, I can still be reached via email and cell phone 207 756 4877 in case anything internet service related develops that you want me to know about or try to do something about.

Meanwhile, contact Brook at the library for tech assistance. 207-326-4560, [brook@brookvillelibrary.org](mailto:brook@brookvillelibrary.org)

Happy, Safe and Healthy Holidays to all. I won't be sending another newsletter unless something of importance comes up. Watch out for Artificial Intelligence!

Abbie

Digital opportunities for you or someone you know!

**1. Job opportunities with AmeriCorps for those with some digital skills and an interest in helping others.** "Island Institute and its regional partners at Hancock County Planning Commission and Midcoast Council of Governments have been selected as host sites for the [American Connection Corps program through Lead for America](#) and we're seeking 3 Fellows to support community broadband and digital inclusion efforts in Hancock and Waldo Counties this coming year. Know anyone who would be interested in supporting a digital inclusion vision for northern midcoast Maine?"

**APPLICATIONS DUE PRONTO** (Unfortunately I can't seem to link the postings here, they were linked in the emailed version of this newsletter. If you aren't on the email list, contact me to be added: [abbiemcmillen@mac.com](mailto:abbiemcmillen@mac.com), subject line "please add to broadband list".)

If, for example, you have a family member who wants to find a good job in Maine (and has the requisite qualifications as outlined in the position descriptions), encourage them to apply. These look like great jobs with multiple benefits. It would be fantastic if someone with ties to Brooksville were to fill them! Here are the qualifications in summary:

**Required knowledge, skills and abilities include:** ACC AmeriCorps Members must be comfortable speaking to groups and giving short presentations on a topic; researching complex topics; making phone calls and writing emails; facilitating meetings and discussions; attending virtual and online events; and possess basic skills with writing, verbal communication, email engagement, Excel/Google sheets, and notetaking. Additional required competencies: Strong writing skills; Strong organizational skills; Interest in rural communities; Interest in storytelling and capturing community voice to help guide the response to community needs; Interest in working with individuals from different generations and varied socio-economic backgrounds; Interest in being part of a learning cohort; Ability to contribute to and follow a work plan; Ability to create and manage websites.

More info at: [leadforamerica.pinpointhq.com/postings/18d01983-2788-4931-ac3a-bb024e5c1c1b](https://leadforamerica.pinpointhq.com/postings/18d01983-2788-4931-ac3a-bb024e5c1c1b)

**2. Monday, July 24th,** you have another chance to find out how to save money and control your TV!

7/24 5-6 PM: **Cutting the Cord - Getting TV & Prone Services over the Internet.** What does it mean to "Cut the Cord"? It's about canceling cable or satellite services and being able to watch television shows online, as well as options that would allow you to get rid of your landline. This class will not only show you the wide variety of options out there, but also teach you some tools to decide if cutting the cord is right for you.

This class is provided at our library for free by the National Digital Equity Center (NDEC). If you're interested in attending this free classes, please [enroll in the NDEC here](#), and then [register for the class here](#). If you need help with the enrollment or registration, please contact Brook Minner (326-4560 or [brook@brooksvillelibrary.org](mailto:brook@brooksvillelibrary.org)) at the library, Doug Cowan (326-0600 or [dougcowan@gmail.com](mailto:dougcowan@gmail.com)), or (Eric Brehm (703-608-9493 or [ericbrehm@icloud.com](mailto:ericbrehm@icloud.com)) for assistance.

**Broadband News # 59**  
**24 June 2023**

Friends:

I hope your internet is up and running! Perhaps you are one of those who has to wait for the “microtrencher”. One of our residents kindly sent me this photo of the trencher at work:



You may notice on the side of the machine that it clearly says “Ditch Witch”. I guess “Microtrencher” is just a fancy term for a colorfully-named machine we have known about for decades - but maybe it’s a specialized version. The resident described the process as opening the trench (a little slit in the grass), laying the conduit that comes on a spool, and covering it in one operation.

I also got a description and photo of the conduit from Butler Smythe of Blue Hill. It’s a little larger than the thickness of a ball point pen. It’s orange (so you would know it when you accidentally dug a hole near it), comes with a “pull string” (for pulling the fiber), and a copper “tracer wire” in it, (presumably so it can be located by DigSafe, another good idea! Homemade conduits often do not have a tracer wire.)



Sadly, our resident’s successful microtrench installation has hit another snag. It seems that CCI is demanding that they do tree work before Fidium will complete the fiber installation. The resident was told to call Versant to get that done, but Versant said they need to hire their own tree trimmer! Versant then said there is a charge of about \$150 to disconnect the power so the tree work can be done safely. Then after the tree work is done, Versant will reconnect the power for another \$150. I am wondering if anyone else has been told something similar? I also wonder how long they are likely to be without electricity while waiting for the reconnect? In any case, be aware that the overhead wires on your personal poles (i.e., the ones you own) need to be adequately tree-free if Fidium is going to string fiber on those poles.

There have been a lot of problems with the VOIP phone system. As near as I can tell, whoever designed the protocols did not take into account that there could be several days, (in some cases over a month) between the time that the customer ordered VOIP for their existing phone number, and the date that their internet would actually be installed so that VOIP could be enabled. The result of this has been that calls made to the customer are not ringing on the customer's not-yet-VOIP phone, but instead are being routed to the Fidium voicemail system before the customer even has a VOIP connection, so the customer has no idea that they have a message waiting. This seems to be a problem especially if the call is made FROM another VOIP phone, or from Fidium itself! It may account for the many cancelled installation appointments where there was no notification of the cancellation. That notification was (IMO stupidly) made to the customer's not-yet-VOIP enabled phone, and was routed to the Fidium answering service, with no alternative notification to the customer that they had a message waiting. It happened to me three separate times, starting in April. I also had a terrible time trying to pick up my messages from the Fidium voicemail service. As it turned out, a technician had plugged the VOIP line into the wrong place on the ONT and changed my phone passcode without telling me. Another tech came out today and fixed it. So, my advice is, go slow on ordering the VOIP phone service, and let them work out the bugs on us "early adopters"! If you've already signed up, you might go to [Fidium.net](http://Fidium.net), set up your phone passcode, become familiar with how to get messages off the Fidium answering service using a phone other than your VOIP phone, and check for messages even before your internet is installed. There might be something in there for you, as there was for me. And if it's not working right, keep pestering until they fix it. It took me 5 phone calls and two site visits by a tech to get the problems resolved. The repair shop is open 24/7.

Keep me posted on your experience and if there's anything we can do to help.

Abbie

## Billing issues

We have been told that there are occasionally mistakes being made in the final CCI bill, the one where you are transitioning to Fidium. If it seems high to you, ask for an explanation and be sure they have calculated it correctly. While you are talking to them, be sure they are crediting your free month if you signed up early for 1 or 2 G, or if they told you that you would be getting a free month due to your installation and outage problems. The free month may not be on the first Fidium bill, but be sure they have it logged into their system.

## Installation issues

Remember I said you could schedule a specific day and time for your outdoor work if you had a problem like a locked gate or a dangerous dog? Well... a similar problem exists, if the "house end" of your conduit or overhead line is actually in a locked building, and not on the exterior of your house! If that's the case, you need to be there for the "outdoor" part of the installation, so be sure to schedule it.

There have been some very VERY frustrating installation problems in my neighborhood. It seems that there was a flawed design for our stretch of Weir Cove road, and not enough fiber was installed to meet all 10 possible customers in this stretch. Some folks have been told they have an installation date, but nobody has showed up, nor has anyone called them with an explanation for the no-show. This has resulted in almost daily calls to Fidium to report the situation, which has continued now for weeks. Still, no explanation or possible date for resolution has been forthcoming. I'm pretty sure it is going to involve new trunk line work that should have been done months ago.

Also, there is a report of inadequate fiber speed at one location, due to the fiber itself having been "pinched" during installation. This has caused intermittent outages at the modem. This too will require in-field splicing with a fancy laser fusion splicer. (I want to watch this very cool process!) Has anyone else experienced this problem?

In addition, some of the many subcontractors have been "pirating" slots in the "Hub", disconnecting previous customers so new customers can get served. This is not supposed to be happening, but it is. We think it may be due in part to a policy that the subcontractors get paid upon completion of a customer installation, so when they run into a situation where they can't find the proper slot in the hub, they just take one away from some other customer, so they can complete the installation and get paid. The customer who had their line "pirated" has to call for a repair visit, which can take at least a day to happen. Shameful.

Consider yourself lucky if none of this applies to your installation. Keep me posted on how it is going for you. Be sure the technician doesn't leave your house until you are satisfied that the system is up and running!

## Phone issues

Again: be sure the technician doesn't leave your house until you are satisfied that the PHONE system is up and running!

If you want to keep using your own answering machine, be sure your VOIP phone is allowing messages to be sent to your answering machine, by having the technician set the number of rings needed to trigger the automatic Fidium answering system to a number GREATER than the rings needed to trigger your answering machine. (For example, my answering machine is set to 4 rings, and at my request the technician set the Fidium system to respond after 5 rings.) I'm going to keep this arrangement until I'm satisfied that I know how to manage the Fidium answering service, and that it works in a stable and reliable fashion.

How do you get your Fidium-saved messages? Check this website: [www.fidiumfiber.com/Support/phone/manage-voicemail](http://www.fidiumfiber.com/Support/phone/manage-voicemail). You will need a voicemail passcode, which is a 6-digit code different from your Fidium Password. However, you may find that you do not have a passcode set up, and the online instructions on how to do it are hard to find. (I think they're here: [www.fidiumfiber.com/Support/phone/reset-voicemail-password](http://www.fidiumfiber.com/Support/phone/reset-voicemail-password).) You probably want to set this passcode with the technician's help at the time your VOIP phone is installed. If you didn't do it then, you are going to have to hunt and peck for the setting page. Try this: on your computer, login to your Fidium Insider Portal. Click the settings icon (the thing that looks like a gear, on the left), click on the tab that says phone (on the right), select Manage Features, select your name (on the right), select portal passcodes (under management, on the left), then click on the little green box on the right, and type in a 6 digit passcode (in the two boxes). You will have to change this 6 digit numerical code at least every 180 days, and you can't use it over again.

Using your VOIP phone, you may get a weird message when you try to call someone with a copper landline who is trying to get a

VOIP line but it's not installed yet. The message says something like "The party you are trying to reach is not available, please leave a message". But no message is actually left. This happened when I tried to call a friend to help her figure out why she had missed several important calls from people who were calling her landline using their new VOIP phones. According to the Fidium voice services tech person I called (from my VOIP phone), the problem lies with my friend's copper landline, and she needs to call Consolidated to figure out what to do so she can get VOIP-generated calls. CCI confirmed that the problem is with her landline. I didn't have any difficulty reaching her, or her answering machine, when I called from a copper landline or a cell phone. It's something of a mystery, and I'm not fully convinced it's just a problem with her landline. It's been going on for weeks, while she is still waiting to get her Fidium service installed (see Installation Issues).

Finally, does anyone else have a loud, raspy or buzzy dial tone on their VOIP phone line? Did you fix it? How?

### **Corporate issues?**

Searchlight Capital is offering to buy CCI: <https://www.consolidated.com/about-us/news/article-detail/id/902/consolidated-communications-announces-receipt-of-take-private-proposal-from-searchlight-capital-and-british-columbia-investment-management>. What are the implications for Brooksville customers? Please let me know your thoughts, if this sort of corporate acquisition thing is in your "wheelhouse".

There is a Better Business Bureau dossier on CCI. There are recent customer evaluations here, and they seem to be pretty negative. I know we have had some very positive as well as some very negative experiences with CCI/Fidium. If you want to weigh in, there may be a way to do that: let me know if you figure it out. <https://www.bbb.org/us/il/mattoon/profile/cable-tv/consolidated-communications-0734-310030931/customer-reviews>

### **New Brochure**

We have posted a "Be Safe Online" brochure on the Town website. To view the brochure, go back to the [Brooksvillemaine.org](http://Brooksvillemaine.org) homepage, choose the "resources" tab, scroll to Brooksville Broadband, and then down the page to the button that says "Stay Safe On Line Brochure". You can also pick up a paper copy in the library. (Good old paper copy!)

Like any powerful and technically complex tool, there is a learning curve. Be patient with it, and with yourself. We will all get the hang of it someday! Brook at the library is willing to help you, and your Broadband Committee hopes to set up some additional "digital navigator" services. Let us know what you need.

Be well ~

Abbie, Doug, Eric, Brook and the rest of the Broadband Committee

P.s. please do a speed test at the Maine Broadband Coalition site, so we can see on a map how Brooksville is coming along! <https://www.mainebroadbandcoalition.org/>

**Broadband News #57**  
**18 May 2023**

Well! just when you think everything is "going gangbusters", something unforeseen happens to mess things up.

Yesterday (Wednesday) sometime after 10 am when we left home to go to Ellsworth, and 3 pm when we returned, our internet and VOIP phone went totally offline. No warning that this was about to happen, and no explanation thus far about why it happened.

As suggested, we unplugged and reconnected the modem/router. Not a cure. Checked with our neighbors: the folks we were able to reach have working service or aren't yet connected with Fidium, supposedly because of issues with the design of the system in our neighborhood, i.e. not enough fiber installed on the poles for the number of customers who are hooking up, or something like that - it's been difficult to get a reliable answer on exactly what the issue is.

We called Fidium on the one remaining phone line that we hadn't converted to VOIP. Put in a repair request, which is supposed to be fulfilled sometime today (Thursday). But one of us has to wait at home until we get a call saying when they are coming. Never mind that we have other important appointments today.

The lessons we have learned, that might be useful to you:

1. If you have Hughes, Starlink, a cell phone hot spot, or some other internet service, do not cancel it until you are absolutely sure your Fidium system is working reliably for, say, at least a few weeks. We unfortunately cancelled our Hughesnet on Tuesday, the day before Fidium failed us.
2. Do not rely solely on your VOIP phone. Either have a cell phone that works reliably at your home, or another land line that you don't convert to VOIP, at least in the near future. Make sure that Fidium knows to call that number to let you know when the repair people are supposedly showing up at your place.
3. When you call to report an outage, don't select the "customer service" option. Go directly to the "repair" option. For another case that was reported to us yesterday, the customer got THREE different answers from different CS representatives. "Fidium roulette" in full swing!
4. Be prepared to lug your computer to the library parking lot, again, to continue your work and correspondence. I had to do that to send you this email.
5. Be prepared to waste an entire day waiting around for a repair guy to show up. It's not their fault, they do the best they can with whatever dispatch orders they are given and whatever jury-rigged solutions they discover had been made before.
6. Be aware that an outage of electricity, while it is thought to be more common than an outage of internet, is at least fixable by deploying a generator. There is no homeowner cure for an outage of your fiber-based internet, and the ramifications are pretty darn inconvenient at best.

What puzzles me is why is this happening? Why wasn't the infrastructure in Brooksville "vetted" better? Is this a problem with cheaply made components in the switching apparatus, as has been suggested? Poor engineering design, also suggested? Incompetent subcontractors, also widely suggested? When are we going to get real answers to the snafus that are popping up? Most people seem to report getting good service, but some of us - not so much. It makes us long for the days when essential communication infrastructure was a regulated industry. Perhaps it's time to fold internet into the regulatory purview of the PUC. (In the 2018 failure of our land line phones, many of us were shocked to learn that internet was not, and still is not, regulated, even though it is essentially a private sector, publicly funded, national patchwork of quasi-monopolies.)

It's richly ironic that both Doug Cowan and I are experiencing problems with our installations. At least nobody can accuse us of having some sort of "inside track"!

I'll let you know how it all sorts out. Please keep sending me your installation stories, the good as well as the not so good. And be aware that your actual speed may be lower than what you are paying for. I just found out that the rate-limiting piece of equipment may in some cases be the CPU in the device you are using to test the speed. Or something called the BUS. Performing the test over WiFi rather than using an ethernet cable plugged directly into the modem can also significantly lower the speed.

**Broadband News #56 – Video Link**  
**10 May 2023**

Well, that party was pretty successful, all things considered! All 30 pizzas were completely devoured, the crowd was large and happy, the mystery door prize (VR goggles) was won by a Brooksville resident who has an 11 yr old grandson (perfect!), the speeches were interesting and brief.\* My estimate is that about 125 people were there. (We should have counted raffle tickets, or we could have simply subtracted the number on the first raffle ticket from the number on the last raffle ticket. Hindsight!) Fidium had lots of fun “swag” to pass around, and some very interesting fiber-related artifacts to look at. Particularly impressive was a gigantic copper cable consisting of a lovely collection of colored wires, but really awkward compared with the petite elegance of the fiber cable. I have a few samples of the fiber cable which I’m going to offer first to the other 8 towns who sent representatives. Brooksville’s sample piece of fiber will go to the Historical Society museum.

Here’s the video that couldn’t be shown yesterday due to technical glitches. Excellent photos of the cable laying process! We were there at the scene, but the camera crew got fabulous closeups that you just couldn’t see from standing on the beach at a distance.

<https://vimeo.com/825633401/daaa2f70d1?share=copy>

Installations are happening every day. Sometimes there are glitches - I experienced another today, and I’m still waiting for the engineer to call me to explain what happened and why our in-house installation couldn’t be done today as scheduled. The pre-install went rather smoothly on Monday, except the lineman said there was something that didn’t make sense about the pole we were being served by. Then our neighbor was told yesterday there wasn’t enough fiber on our road, so he couldn’t get his installation done as scheduled. I’m sure it will get sorted, eventually. This is a huge project with a very large number of residences being served almost simultaneously over a large geographic area. Even some other broadband companies are impressed. But there are a lot of subcontractors and apparently not the world’s best communication going on among the companies involved. Ironic, right?

Some people are doing speed tests right after installation, as we requested, with the Maine Broadband Coalition. They are sometimes not getting the speeds they are paying for. It’s understood that there is attrition due to WiFi and distance from modem,. If multiple devices are working at the same time things slow down, and you can get different results based on the type of device you are using for your test. But what I am hearing is that people are very happy with the speeds they are getting even if they are a fraction of what they are paying for! Hopefully, though, Fidium will diagnose and fix the cases where the speed is dramatically lower (e.g. 278M/126M with a 2 G subscription). Interestingly, those who signed up for 50M seem to be getting slightly HIGHER speeds than that.

Some people have had service stop suddenly without warning or explanation. We are advised that the customer should try unplugging their modem for 2 to 3 minutes and plugging it back in. There’s a chance that the modem will perform an automatic upgrade depending on how long it was sitting in a box. After plugging it back in, if the service doesn’t come back on, they should call Fidium for a trouble ticket.

Please keep sending me your experiences with the installation. Please also do the speed test on the Maine Broadband Coalition website, even if you have other speed test sites you like to use. Let me know if there’s anything we can do to help. There should be an article in this week’s Penobscot Bay Press about the party. We also hope to have a video of the party being put together by Jim Picariello.

\*Short notes from the speeches: By no means complete, just what I can remember off the top of my head

Andrew Butcher: his multigenerational Brooksville family has a tradition that a celebration after accomplishing something difficult calls for pie! Pizza is a pie!

Nick Battista (ConnectME): Many people worked for years to make this project happen.

Kelly Cotiaux (Sen. Collins): gave us a beautifully presented letter of congratulations from the Senator for our archives

Christina Bream (Sen. King): affordable, high speed internet is one of the Senator’s top priorities, and he has worked to make the funding available

Zach Schmesser (Rep. Golden): Stay in touch with your congressman, and now that you are getting high speed internet, you can do this easily

Nat Barrows (Penobscot Bay Press): Volunteers are the key! They work because of love of community.

Shelley Jackson (GSA): Digital literacy is absolutely essential to prepare kids for the world they are going to inherit - and it’s global in reach.

Butler Smythe (PUB): Now that we have accomplished our infrastructure goal, we are going to start focusing on affordable connectivity and digital literacy



7 May 2023

As I write this, preparations for Tuesday's celebration are in full swing (hope you can come!) Many residents have been connected already. Early reports have identified glitches, but somewhat heroic efforts of Fidium installation people to overcome them. I hope you will send me a short note about your experiences, both the good as well as the not so good.

**As soon as your new internet is functioning, Please take the speed test offered by the Maine Broadband Coalition! It's here:**

<https://www.mainebroadbandcoalition.org/speed-test-info>

The reason to take this particular speed test is that the results are plotted on a map of Brooksville. We are excited to see the town change from looking like it has red measles, to looking like a verdant forest of green dots! You may notice that your speed test improves over time, as the system gets used to your addition. I have no idea why, but it's true. So take the speed test right away, and then again a day or two later, and let me know if there was a difference.

Here are some more notes on installation for you to consider, based on the experiences so far, as reported by residents.

### **General:**

1. [Get the name and company affiliation](#) of any contractors or subcontractors who come to work at your house, indoors or out. This is a good idea for any type of work you are having done at your home. Fidium is using a lot of subs, some from pretty far away.
2. [Please send me a note about your experience](#), both the good and the not so good.

### **"Pre-Installation Visit"**

The date you scheduled when you called Fidium to sign up for service is the date they are coming to do the INDOOR part of the installation. Pre-installation usually happens a few days prior, and is when they do the OUTDOOR part of the installation.

1. [You may want to be there for the pre-installation work](#). If you have a locked gate, dangerous dogs, or anything else that would impede the outdoor work, you should formally schedule the pre-installation so you can be there when it happens. If you are expecting the fiber to come to your house through a conduit, I also highly recommend that you are present for the pre-install.
2. [If there is a reason that the pre-install can't be done](#) before the indoor installation is scheduled, they are supposed to call you to reschedule, but we know of several instances where they haven't called, and the customer is left wondering why they didn't keep the indoor installation appointment. It's a good idea to check to see if the outdoor work has been done in advance, and to call Fidium if the day for indoor work is two days away and nothing has been done outside. You want to avoid the experience of a wasted afternoon, like I had for an installation in Penobscot. (The outdoor work couldn't be done because they couldn't find a "flagger" for the truck that needed to be parked on Route 15, and I wasn't notified in advance of the need to reschedule.)

### **Let's say you need or want a new conduit**

1. [If your conduit run is shorter than 500 ft from the pole where your drop originates](#): If it's technically feasible, Fidium will deploy a microtrencher and create your conduit connection for free. Technical feasibility includes (but is not limited to) things like being able to avoid ledge, stream crossings, etc. However, the microtrencher is in great demand, so it will be some time before it can get to your address on a long and growing list. If it's technically feasible, Fidium might be willing to lay your cable across the ground so they can complete the indoor installation and get you online as soon as possible. Technical feasibility includes (but is not limited to) Fidium determining that the cable will be safe, reasonably well protected, and not likely to cause any accidents.
2. [If you need a new conduit that is longer than 500 feet](#), you have to provide the entire length of it on your own dime. Detailed Specifications are not available at this time: we're agitating for Fidium to provide them. There is a rumor that the technicians will pull fiber through 3/4 inch black plastic water tubing, but that seems sketchy to me, especially if the line is buried in a vehicle travel lane.

### **Let's say you already have a conduit**

1. [Fidium will try to use it](#), by using the existing copper lines as a "pull string" to thread the new fiber cable through it. This may not be possible for any number of reasons (although just this morning I heard of an 800 ft conduit where it worked!). Some of the problems we have run into include phone lines that were actually direct buried with no conduit, phone lines that were run in a conduit along with an electrical service line, a conduit that had been crushed during construction, a conduit with sharp right angle bends, a conduit that was too narrow to accept another wire, a conduit that was too long and had no "pull boxes". Be aware that if any of these conditions are insurmountable, you will have to revert to the "new conduit" paragraphs above, or install poles, at your expense.

2. [Fidium will leave your copper wires in place](#). Maybe this is so DigSafe can find the conduit if it needs to in the future? (But this begs the question what does DigSafe do if your conduit is new and only contains fiber!) You might want to verify by inspection that the copper has been returned to its original position, if it was used to pull your fiber line.

**“Installation Visit”, i.e. when indoor work gets done**

1. [Be sure your entire system is working before your installer leaves](#). Especially if you have ordered a VOIP phone. Do not let the installer leave you without a working phone! Take the time to check the system to YOUR satisfaction.

2. [If there is a service issue right after your installation and after the installer has left](#), like if your internet or phone suddenly stops working within a few hours or so (which has happened), call the Fidium service department, get a “ticket”, and tell them it seems to be an issue with your new installation. They say they typically respond within 24-72 hours if there is an “outage”. The definition of “outage” would seem to imply multiple houses, which is probably not your situation. Check with your neighbors, though. So far, reports are that the response time has been good.

3. [Be aware that it may take some time for your VOIP phone to go online](#).

Not sure why this is. We speculate it’s because the world wide web has to add your phone number and location, or something like that. Here’s what Barney Boardman told me, which made me chuckle: " I was told that it takes 48 hrs after system is installed for all those services to be

“Populated”?? into your account. I have to wonder just what they are breeding to cause such a population?"

4. [Please do a speed test](#) and send me the results, along with the service level you signed up for, and about how far away the modem is from the device where you did the test. You can expect some attrition due to WiFi.

**Broadband News #54**  
**28 April 2023**

Well, in the “too good to be true” department, I just now (9 am) got a note from Sarah Davis saying the “free month” is NOT available except to people signing up for 1G or 2G. She writes: “This offer is only for 1G and 2G plans. I will make sure our call center is giving the correct answers. This is a promotional offer to drive take at the those speeds..” I do not know what Fidium plans to do about the customers who were already promised a free month at the lower speeds, i.e. whether they will honor that commitment, or issue an “oops we’re sorry”.

In other news (I had Simon at Fidium verify the italicized words below):

*Fidium recognizes that you might want to change your speed in the future.*

*You have not entered into a contract with Fidium that requires a set period of time at a particular speed.*

*If you find that you want to go to a lower speed, you can do so. You will not need to swap out your ONT or your modem. Your speed can be lowered remotely. There are probably reasonable limits on how often you can do that, so you aren't abusing the opportunity.*

*If you find that you want to go to a higher speed than 50M or 250M, a service call MAY need to be made to swap out your existing ONT for one capable of higher speeds (your modem will not change.)*

This swap will be done *free of charge*, but of course will require a visit by a technician to make the swap. Apparently some of the ONTs will already be capable of higher speeds, and some won't. I am encouraging Fidium to let the customer know which model of ONT they are installing, if the customer wants to know.

To figure out what speed you need, try this nifty tool: [https://www.highspeedinternet.com/how-much-internet-speed-do-i-need?kbid=158920&utm\\_source=google&utm\\_medium=paid\\_search&utm\\_campaign=14416526823&utm\\_content=125887276065&utm\\_term=aud-303027296536;kwd-300869993673&gclid=EAIaIQobChMIgK-T6pXK\\_gIVFRStBhliOg6mEAAYASAAEgKbNPD\\_BwE](https://www.highspeedinternet.com/how-much-internet-speed-do-i-need?kbid=158920&utm_source=google&utm_medium=paid_search&utm_campaign=14416526823&utm_content=125887276065&utm_term=aud-303027296536;kwd-300869993673&gclid=EAIaIQobChMIgK-T6pXK_gIVFRStBhliOg6mEAAYASAAEgKbNPD_BwE)

I tried it and came up with 100M for us. I don't think Fidium currently offers a 100M option - but perhaps in the future. I signed up for 1G, plus VOIP for 207-326-8022. Still trying to figure out how to add my husband's phone number. We spend a shocking amount of time on our phones simultaneously!

Looking forward to your comments and experiences! Write or phone me!  
Abbie

**Broadband News #53 (already!)  
26 April 2023**

Some “fine print” arising from today’s flurry of signup activity:

1. Different Fidium customer service reps may have different answers to the same question. (My friend calls it “Fidium Roulette”). Example: Is there a “one-month free” deal for 2 gigs as well as one gig? One rep said no, another said yes.
2. Your “one month free” doesn’t start the day your service is activated. It starts with the beginning of the next billing cycle. One rep said this was around the 10-11 of the month. Billing cycle start date depends on physical location - or something. So, your first month bill has a pro-rata share of a full month calculated depending on when you get in sync with the billing cycle.
3. The \$70 fee for one gig depends on paperless billing and automatic debits. You have to sign up for these features after you are connected.
4. If you didn’t activate the one-month-free feature when you created your account, you still may be able to get it. Call them before Friday 4/28, explain that you did get the offer by text or email (save the notice just in case), and you would like the free month. People have been told this request will be honored.
5. One rep said the third year price for 2 gigs will be \$105. (I did not ask about years beyond that.)
6. Glitches have occurred when some unforeseen thing (like a frozen conduit) prevents the service from being activated on the scheduled date. It has happened (rarely) that the phone service was cut off for several days while the unforeseen thing was being fixed. Before the service tech leaves, be sure your phone is working, especially if your internet connection was not able to be activated on the scheduled day.
7. Fidium says: “Before your installation day, you may see Fidium vehicles or personnel outside your home. We’re simply prepping the fiber lines and our equipment so we’re ready to bring the best service into your home during your scheduled in-home appointment. If you have a locked fence, a dog, or something else you think may cause an issue for us while we do this work on your property, **please let us know**. You don’t need to be home during this outdoor prep work.”  
But what if you want to be there to watch the exciting deployment of your conduit, for example? Let them know in advance. Your installation notice will have a phone number to call.
8. If you are seasonal and not going to arrive until later in the summer, at least one rep said you can sign up now and have the installation scheduled for after you arrive. Your billing can’t start until your system is up and running anyway. Some folks with a seasonal disconnect have been told to de-activate the disconnect (i.e. restore service) first, THEN call to schedule your installation and conversion from CCI to Fidium.
9. If you have two separate phone numbers, each one has to have a different associated email address - at least according to some of the reps. Mac users note: .me, .mac and .icloud all look like separate addresses to the Fidium system, even though they are all prefixed exactly the same way and come into the same computer. I found this to be a handy workaround that means you don’t need to create a new email account someplace.
10. Some reps say the devices for the 1 and 2 gig service are different from the devices for the less speedy services. Other reps say that’s not the case, that there is only one device for all speeds and the speed can be changed remotely. I still don’t have the correct answer on this.
11. At least one customer ordering VOIP did not have to go through a “third party verification” process. I am unclear on whether this was because the customer was ordering a new phone number, as opposed to keeping the old CCI (copper line) phone number. Keeping my number meant I had to talk to the robot that does “verification” by recording your answers to some “do you want to do this” questions.
12. There are several different phone numbers you could call to schedule service. There’s 866-387-0251 which came up on my cell phone, and 844-434-3486 which came up on my computer. There’s also an 855 number which someone told me is for business accounts, even though it appeared on one of my devices. I guess calling the 844 number is the best bet.
13. Step 2 in the ordering process involves checking a box that says you read and accept the terms of service. There’s a scroll window where you can read through the terms. I suggest you highlight and scroll, then print all 8 or so pages, date your copy, put it in your Fidium file folder, and actually read it. It’s pretty interesting and explains a lot.
14. The May 9 event now has statewide publicity, via a notice sent out by the Maine Broadband Coalition. Hope to see you there! It’s gonna be a party!

**Broadband News # 52**  
**26 April 2023**

It's Signup time for Brooksville!

If you have not yet received your "signup now" email, it's possible that you can sign up and schedule your installation by going to [fidiumfiber.com](http://fidiumfiber.com), entering your address, and navigating a series of buttons until you get to a phone number to call. Or call directly 1-844-434-3486. I just did that. Because we have no DSL from CCI, but two phone lines from CCI, our case is a tad complicated, and the (very nice) Fidium rep has to do some research. She promised to call me back today!

Couple of things to note: **We have had reports of a SCAM purporting to offer one month of FREE service if you sign up for 1 gig.** Dan H. followed up with phone calls to Fidium and determined it to be a scam. We have reported it to Fidium. (The nerve of some people!)

Another thing: when you go to transfer your CCI phone to a Fidium VOIP service, you will have to go through a "third party verification" step. The reason for this is explained by Fidium thusly: "The FCC mandates you go through "third party verification" when you change phone service providers and retain your telephone number. Fidium VoIP service is provided by a nonregulated entity, as opposed to the copper service, which is provided by the incumbent local exchange carrier ("ILEC"), so although they are all Consolidated legal entities, they are technically different companies. I will note this is not a new construct, for regulatory reasons currently long distance of DSL would be provided by the nonregulated entity and phone service by the ILEC. The process involves a transfer away from the rep to a phone system provided by a third party that asks you to confirm you want to change your phone service provider. It is slightly confusing in the affiliate situation, but in general it is a rule to protect consumers from unauthorized transfer of their phone service (clearly a much larger issue in the days of robust phone competition when companies would try to trick people). It should only take about 30 seconds on the phone, the customer is then transferred back to the rep. to complete the order."

The takeaway is that, when you transfer from a CCI phone to a Fidium phone, you are going from a PUC-regulated entity to a non-regulated entity. This is in addition to the fact that you need battery backup. (It's worthwhile reading the "terms and conditions" that you have to check a box saying that you read and agree to) In the end, we decided to go ahead with the VOIP phone, but you may feel differently.

The Celebration on May 9 starting at 4:30 at the community center is garnering statewide interest! And statewide publicity! Let's make an overwhelming show of support for this game-changing event for Brooksville and our sister towns. If we manage it correctly, we will experience only benefit - this depends on implementation of the Town Comprehensive Plan, I'll wager!

14 April 2023

Here's the projected date when residents of Brooksville will be able to sign up for service: **April 28**

We found out today that the 326 phone exchange, which has about 1000 customers total in Castine and Brooksville, has the **highest pre-order rate of any location** that CCI/Fidium has ever seen anywhere, mostly due to Brooksville! Yay Brooksville!

The monthly cost for service has been changing (i.e. lowering) and may continue to lower even further for some categories. Keep checking <https://www.fidiumfiber.com/fiber-internet> for the latest rates. As of today, that website shows one month FREE, but that offer is expiring April 16. This seems unfair to Brooksville as we can't sign up until the 28th! So we are working on that.

We heard that there may soon be 100 MB symmetrical service available for ACP customers. We also learned that about 40% of Mainers probably qualify for the ACP rate, but not enough people have signed up for it. Check to see if you qualify. Here is one place to get started: <https://getacp.org/Maine> Doug has noted that one qualifier is if you are on MaineCare. You can get help signing up from Doug, or Brook at the library, 326-4560. Don't be discouraged by the application process! There is help available! Tell your friends and family!

We learned that, for 1 GB and 2 GB service, the "optical network terminal" (ONT) is the same device, but the ONT for the 250 MB and 50 MB service is a different device. So if you want to upgrade from one of the lower speeds to a higher speed in the future, it will require a service call to replace the ONT. (Likewise if you want a faster speed.)

A customer in Blue Hill had a "glitch" in the phone installation. The fiber connection couldn't be completed on the scheduled date due to a frozen conduit, but the CCI phone was transferred to Fidium on the scheduled date, which resulted in several days without a phone until the conduit unfroze! This was a unique situation that should not happen again. But be aware there may be other glitches along the way, just so you aren't expecting perfection. (It's a human endeavor after all.) E.g. there was an instance where a customer's wifi printer didn't work with the new Fidium wifi router. I don't know the reason, or how the problem was fixed, but it was suggested that a remedy could be to plug the printer directly into the modem via an Ethernet cable.

I learned that another advantage of a VOIP phone system is that if you are going on a trip, you can have your home phone calls transferred to your cell phone number.

Party planning is proceeding apace. I hope you will be able to **come to the Community Center on May 9 at 4:30 for free pizza and celebration**. I'll send more info on the program specifics sometime before April 28.

As always, feel free to ask questions any time. ~ Ciao!



ALL are invited!

**MAY9**

**CELEBRATION**

Because FIBER INTERNET has come to BROOKSVILLE and nearby towns!

Brooksville Community Center - doors open 4:30 ~ free pizza and snacks

program starts at 5:00 - FMI 207~326-8022

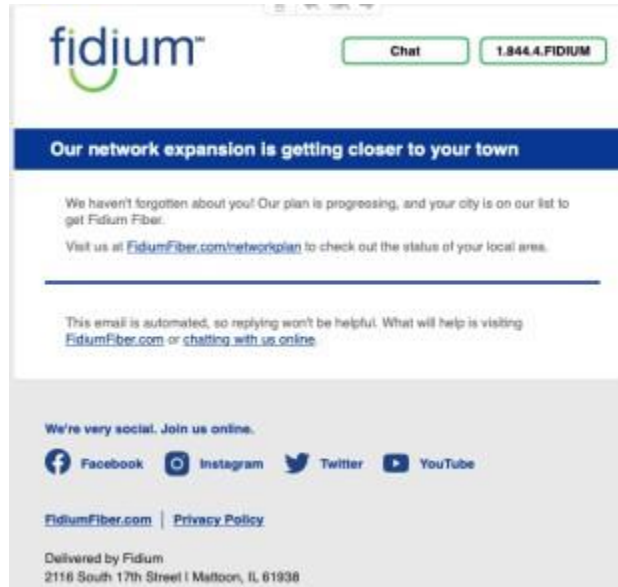
•Blue Hill, Brooklin, Brooksville, Castine, Deer Isle, Penobsco Sedgwick, Stonington

10 April 2023

We're almost at the finish line! As of today, the undersea cable is supposed to be laid TOMORROW! So it won't be too many more weeks before you will actually have better internet!

### SOME SIGNUP DETAILS

Maybe you have already gotten a notice like this one:



You should soon get another notice saying you can NOW sign up. OR you can keep checking the <https://www.fidiumfiber.com/> website and entering your address. Eventually, you will get this in reply: (See the words “Fidium Fiber is **available to order now** at your location” I redacted the actual physical address in Penobscot that I was testing. Your address will appear.)



Now this is where it gets interesting! You are finally going to pick your service level, and order service! However, if you are already a CCI internet customer (as the majority of people in Brooksville are) you are going to have to make a phone call to do it. The process takes a few minutes but thankfully there is a human at the other end of the line to walk you through it.

#### First you are supposed to establish your Fidium account:

- Call 1- 844-434-3486, choose option 2 - change service
- Have your existing CCI account number and PIN available. (If you don't remember your PIN, you may be able to use “security questions”.)
- An actual person will guide you through all the steps and decisions.
- Be prepared to choose your service level, (for instance the 50 MB level if you want the lowest cost)
- You will agree to a mutually convenient installation date and time. (Just like scheduling any other service call to your home!)
- You will fill out a consent form to transfer your internet account from CCI to Fidium. (I found it to be a confusing form, ask for help with this.)



- At the end of this process, you will get a 4-page email with information and instructions. Read and Save this! It includes information for installation day.
- Part of the email will be a statement saying the cost will be \$35/month for the first year (for the 50 MB option).
- **This does NOT include the Affordable Connectivity Program discount.** IF YOU ARE ALREADY IN THE ACP program there are additional steps, as follows.

**After you have your new Fidium account**, you ask for your ACP discount to apply to your new Fidium service:

- Call 1-844-434-3486 (that's the same number. If you are still on the phone with the first rep, you can ask to be transferred to the ACP department, but there are only a few reps there, and they may have to call you back.)
- You will be guided to go to [consolidated.com](https://consolidated.com) Under "residential support" at the bottom of the page, click on Affordable Connectivity.
- With the ACP rep's help, you will fill out another consent form to transfer your ACP benefit from CCI to Fidium
- You will use your NEW Fidium account number, which they probably know, but which is also on the 4-page instructions you saved.
- The new rate (for the 50 MB option) will be \$11.50 plus tax for the first year. The first month bill will be for a prorated amount reflecting any amount owed on the CCI account, plus the first month of Fidium service.
- The ACP benefit is subject to change (it's a federal program). As of today, if you were to be entering the second year of the program, the monthly rate would be \$30 for 50 MB with the ACP discount.

Save all the emails they send you.

One thing I noticed on that 4-page form: there is a \$200 connection charge listed, but it's waived by a credit of the same amount. I think this means that if you delay signing up until after they stop offering free connection (whenever that may happen, months from now), there will in fact be a connection charge. Best not to tarry.

Also note that the first year monthly charge is lower than in the second and subsequent years. This is another incentive for early signup. For my "test subject" in Penobscot, the second year with the ACP is projected to cost \$30/month for 50 MB. It's about \$27 now, for 15 MB.

If you are not already in the ACP program, we will soon have information on how to see if you qualify, and how to enroll. Ask Doug, or Brook at the library.

### WORKING OVERTIME ?

Last Thursday at 2:20 AM I was awakened by lights from a large white "boom truck" coming slowly down our driveway. I couldn't see the logo, if any, on the side. Next day, I asked a contractor in a white "boom truck" from Louisiana (doing brush clearing for Versant) if it was them, and they said no, but it might have been the "cable guys". There weren't any power outages in our area. I still don't have an answer as to who this was, Fidium is looking into it. Do let me know if something like this happens in your neighborhood in the middle of the night, and I will let you know what I find out.

### YOU are INVITED

Tomorrow I'll be sending you an emailed invitation to the May 9 celebration.

## Broadband News #49

24 March 2023

### Well! Good news!

Fidium is now projecting that the cable will be laid between 1 and 14 April. This means Brooksville will be ready for hookup shortly thereafter. Keep watching your email from Fidium (you have signed up to be notified, right?) to see when you can formally order service.

Accordingly a **CELEBRATION** for the entire project (all 8 towns) is planned for **May 9**, in Brooksville, in the late afternoon/early evening. It will be sponsored by Fidium and the Maine Connectivity Authority, and we hear that **free pizza** will be involved! **Can you send me an email indicating whether you might come?** This will help us to decide the venue. We could also use a few volunteers for helping with setup and cleanup. Once we have the program put together I'll send details. We hope to be able to show a video of the cable being laid, and there will be other interesting and useful information available as well as a chance to have your questions answered. What would YOU like to hear about? Let me know! Save the date and join in the commemoration of this historic event, akin to when North Brooksville got electricity! It will be a party!

**We are looking for volunteers to be in a video.** Fidium would like to film some Brooksville residents during that April 1-14 timeframe, talking briefly about what the internet improvement will mean for them. It won't take more than ½ hour of your time, at your place – they will come to you. I can see that this would be fun for young people, and might even result in a community service credit. It could also boost a local business, and give people a chance to express how important better connectivity will be for them, their friends and families. **Please contact me if you are possibly willing to participate.** I will pass along your contact to Sarah Davis at Fidium, who will explain everything. I think she is probably looking for a variety of internet users – kids, telecommuters, local business, retirees, educators, writers, artists, builders, fishermen...

**More good news:** Fidium has lowered its 2G pricing. In the first year it is now \$85 and goes to \$95 in the second year with no install fee. Also, we have heard that the lowest monthly fee for customers that are in the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) is now - - - \$0, with \$15 for phone, even if you don't use the internet. We will have more info on the ACP on May 9.

### Maine Broadband Coalition issues a Call for broadband stories

They write "... we're really interested in hearing broadband stories from you all. We've created a short Google Form that we hope you'll fill out with your personal experience with (or without) broadband." Here's the form: <https://forms.gle/i2wywFhTcoV3ahyR7>.

**It's finally happening, folks!**

**Save the date – May 9!**

**Join in the video!**

## Broadband News # 48

15 March 2023

You may hear that other nearby towns are getting their Fidium fiber connections completed this month. Lucky for them, frustrating for all of us in Brooksville. It's mostly due to that undersea cable. A recent summary of the situation is on the updated (March 11) PUB website <https://www.peninsulautility4broadband.org/whats-happening.html> I've reproduced a section here.

*"The western areas of Penobscot and Brooksville that need an undersea cable connection to the Central Office (CO) in Castine will be getting that work done by late May if not before. CCI is working to reduce that timeline ... **Once the network is complete and tested, and their area is available, those who pre-ordered ...will get email notification. Only then will sign-up for actual service be available.** Brooksville & Penobscot areas affected by the Undersea Cable installation & splicing are: FDH 6, 7, 8 & 9 (colors Green, Orange, Purple and Blue)- circled by the red line. No other areas are affected!"* (We think FDH stands for Fidium Digital Hub or something like that)



That same link to the PUB site also has information on conduit and other connection types in case you are still figuring out what you are going to do.

So, sometime in May (possibly April, possibly June) we are told that you will get a flyer in the (snail) mail saying it's time to sign up. You may also get an email notice, and possibly a note in your CCI bill. It's going to be hard NOT to know when it's time to sign up!

If you have DSL from CCI, you will need to make a phone call to arrange for Fidium. You can arrange for VOIP phone service at the same time.

People who do not want fiber internet or VOIP don't have to do anything at all. Your existing phone and/or DSL service remain unchanged, at least for a while. (Maybe a fairly long while, depending on how long the copper-based system holds together.) If you decide later (say next year) that you want to sign up for fiber, you can do so then. There may be a charge for connecting at that time, but currently there are no plans to charge in the future. On a case-by-case basis, if you have a difficult connection e.g. a long driveway needing a conduit, there may be an extra cost to you, but this remains to be determined.

So, Brooksville friends, all we can do at present is observe the experience in our sister towns who are going before us, and decide what we want to do in our individual situations.

On the question of the Affordable Connectivity Program, there is some indication that many people who are eligible for this reduced rate have not signed up for it. The savings are substantial, and if you have any thought that you might possibly qualify, I urge you to look into it. Paste the following link into your browser:

<https://www.fidiumfiber.com/Support/billing/fiber-internet-discount-affordable-connectivity-program>

Doug Cowan, or Brook at the library, would be the people to contact if you would like help applying. At present, CCI/Fidium is not providing devices under this program, just a reduced service rate.

I'll probably not be writing another newsletter for a month, **but if you have questions, I'm happy to answer them if I can.** For past newsletters, see the NEW Town website:

<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/637524f86c674613cd55b32e/t/6408f66648030b30aa1bae17/1678308968012/Broadband+Committee+Newsletters.pdf>

They are presented with the latest on top.

Happy spring! It officially starts Monday!

Abbie

## Broadband News #47

23 Feb, 2023

I've received a few questions since the last newsletter. Thinking others might have the same questions, here are some answers.

**1.** Some people have had interruptions in their DSL internet, coincident with Fidium work on the trunk lines nearby. This should not be happening. If it is, please call CCI and ask someone to look into it. Details are important: location, time and date, duration, and what exactly was affected. It could be an issue with the DSL service unrelated to the fiber installation. (Remember, unreliable DSL is one reason we are enthusiastic about going to fiber!) However, there shouldn't be any interruptions, so do report it - and let me know, too.

**2.** Some details regarding signing up for Fidium phone service ("VOIP" = Voice Over Internet Protocol):

~ You don't have to get VOIP. You can keep your copper landline, but be aware the service may phase out over time. It is unknown how much longer the copper service will last.

~ If you don't want VOIP but you do want internet and a copper land line, you will be paying two separate monthly bills, one to CCI for phone, and one to Fidium for internet.

~ You can sign up for VOIP at the same time that you select your internet speed and schedule your installation. ~ If you do sign up for VOIP, and you don't have a generator that serves your internet circuit (preferably with automatic start), you will want to get a battery for backup.

~ If the backup battery is on-site when Fidium comes into your house to install your modem, there is a good chance Fidium might install the battery for you - provided it is compatible and of good quality. (See newsletter #39 for Fidium's recommendation, but other makes and models would work.)

~ You will keep your existing telephone equipment and indoor wiring, as well as your existing phone number, whether or not you go with VOIP.

~ You can have a maximum of two phone numbers on a standard VOIP installation.

~ If you have an alarm system that uses a phone to call someone, consult with your alarm company to find out what you need to do (if anything).

**3.** Speaking of scheduling the installation: you will schedule the indoor work after you receive a notice that Fidium is ready for you to do so. About 3 days before your scheduled time, Fidium will create the connection outdoors between the trunk line and your house. They will place a small box on the outside of your house. You do not need to be at home for this (although you might want to be!) because Fidium will be following your existing communication pathway. On the scheduled installation day, they will need to be in your house to place the "ONT" (optical network terminal), the modem, the VOIP connection (if you have ordered it), and any "mesh" units you might need to boost the signal within your house. Up to two mesh units are included in their price: if you need more than two, you can buy them. Each home is unique. How many mesh units you need cannot be predicted without a site visit, as it depends on distances, the nature of the walls, whether there are any barriers such as a stone fireplace, and where your devices (e.g. computers) are located. The technicians will go to the places in your house where you want to receive a signal, and check whether it is adequate when deciding how many mesh units you need. (A modest sized house won't need any.) You can have a general idea of where you want the modem, preferably central to the building if you want reception everywhere. The modem can't be located outside where the temperature gets cold, such as in a garage.

**4.** We've been noticing the crews in trucks with many different logos and license plates. These are Fidium subcontractors. We've had several reports that the crews don't speak English, in fact a crew in my neighborhood speaks only Russian!. Do not be alarmed by this. Do the "welcome to Brooksville" thing and offer them some cookies or hot cocoa, being sure however not to slow down their work!. Hopefully, when it comes to the indoor installation, the technicians will speak and understand our language!

**5.** You have seen a wide variety of little black boxes ("terminals") that are appearing in seemingly random locations along the new cables, maybe located somewhat near a dwelling. There are about 2 dozen different styles that I have seen so far. I'm told they all do roughly the same thing, and Fidium has many makes and models in deployment. You may also see extra coils of fiber cable here and there, to allow for more terminals. It's sometimes a mystery to me why they are placed where they are.

**6.** What will become of those other "remote terminals", i.e. the big gray or tan boxes along the side of the road, which serve to connect copper landline phone and DSL wires to the trunk lines? They will be in use until all the copper phone lines and DSL internet lines are switched over to fiber. You may remember the terrible problems in 2018 when some parts of town were entirely without phone service for weeks. That was caused by leaky remote terminals and corroded copper. To me this says we had better get used to using VOIP. Finally, the Town Report this year is a work of art. If you can view it online, you will be blown away by the photos. Good job, Gayle, Amber et al! See you at Town Meeting March 7! (Don't forget to vote, March 6.)

Abbie

## Broadband News #46

17 Feb, 2023

Sarah Davis of Fidium just sent me this email: “How do you feel about some good news? We are scheduling the barge to get in the water at the end of March and will place the cable between April 1 and 14th.”

This is indeed good news. It means Brooksville could be getting fast internet before May. We may be a little later than our surrounding neighbor towns, but not by much.

At some point, if you have signed up online to get notified (which you undoubtedly have done by now! – see Newsletter #43) you will get an email notice from Fidium saying it’s almost time to select your speed and schedule getting the service. Please watch for it. The notice might say something like the following, which some folks in Blue Hill received around Feb. 16:

Your neighborhood’s in the final stretch for Fidium Fiber internet!

We’re about 2 weeks away from being able to schedule installation of your ultra-fast, fiber-based Internet.

Once our final testing is finished, we’ll send you a link to place your order online. It only takes a minute.

So, the thing to do now is to decide whether you want to also sign up for VOIP phone service, and if so, to make sure you have arranged for a backup battery. It would also be a good idea to try to figure out where you would like the Fidium technicians to place the modem, and decide if the two “boosters” that come with the service will be adequate for your needs. If you have no idea what I am talking about, you can first check past newsletters, and then write to me with your residual questions! All past newsletters are on the Town website:

<https://www.brookvillemaine.org/brooksville-broadband>

Newsletter # 35, answer #8

Newsletter # 36, “In-House Equipment”

Newsletter # 38

Newsletter #39 “Battery Backup”

You can also check the regional PUB website which is comprehensive and up to date: <https://www.peninsulautility4broadband.org> .

Please note, if you are getting DSL service from CCI, and want Fidium fiber service, at the appropriate time you will need to make a phone call to confirm the switchover. They will let you know when and how.

## **Broadband News #45 – Call off the dogs!**

**21 Jan 2023**

Greetings! The title of this newsletter is supposed to be a lighthearted retraction of the concern expressed in News #44. As it turns out, the Fidium representatives going door to door are legitimate, and they are working in multiple towns. It's just that the Fidium officials who are here in Maine (and supposed to be coordinating with local and state government) did not know this door-to-door thing was happening. You may wonder how that could have happened and what it portends for the future, but that's a discussion for another day. The bottom line is everyone can stop being concerned about a scam.

The door-to-door people are working under a contract. We've asked for the name of the contractor, and how Fidium assured itself that the actual field people were upstanding citizens. We don't have answers to those questions yet. So, if you feel that something is a bit "off" with how you are being approached, what I would do is get the person's name and license plate number – after all, they are asking questions of you such as your phone number, email address etc. – and the name of the company that is directly paying them, i.e. the contractor (if they know it) - and keep a record of it. There have been a few amusing incidents, and a few instances where the information provided by the door-to-door person appears to be erroneous. If you have the time and inclination, I would love to hear your stories.

Apparently, the contractors have a list of people or addresses to approach. If they tell you that they don't know the fact that you signed up online – possibly repeatedly – it's because they got their list quite some time ago, possibly before you signed up online. In our neighborhood, it's apparently only the houses they can see from the road that are being blessed with a visit. Those of us with long driveways haven't seen hide nor hair of them.

So, go ahead, give only information you are comfortable about giving, and be SURE you have signed up online! Again!

Always happy to answer your specific questions, if I can.

Abbie

P.s. Several people asked about the colored lines on the map in News #44, and what does it mean if they are located in a "gap". The colored lines are only "trunk lines". The numerous individual hookups to houses (either present or future) don't show up on that map. And it's not particularly accurate, either, but rather an approximation, judging from what I know about my own neighborhood.

20 January 2023

**IMPORTANT**

I just got off a conference zoom with Fidium. **THEY ARE NOT** in the field currently, soliciting information about your interest in connecting. **THEY DO NOT** wear yellow hats. If someone is coming to your door, they **DO NOT** represent Fidium, at least not yet. Sometime in the future, they may be going door to door, but Fidium **WILL KNOW** if you have already signed up online for service. And when they start doing field signup, we will be informed and will let you know through this newsletter. Please tell your friends who may not be getting this newsletter. And, if someone purporting to be from Fidium approaches you, please let us know immediately. Fidium is looking into the reports of this suspicious activity, which **HAS** occurred in Brooksville.

Other news from the conference call:

Disappointingly, Brooksville is likely not going to be hooked up until Memorial Day, apparently due to a lack of available barges for installing the undersea cable. See map below – all the orange, light lavender blue, royal blue and bright green lines. All these areas in Brooksville are apparently served by that darned cable! Fidium is checking this, in case it's not accurate, but for now it seems to be the case.



The state (DEP I believe) has to OK the placement of cable in May, but Fidium does not anticipate any difficulty with that approval. Before the cable is laid, there will be construction on land, on both ends of the undersea part, but Fidium does not foresee any problems with that, either.

Everyone else in the 8-town region can expect to be **READY TO ORDER SERVICE** by the end of March. **UNLESS** you have an underground installation that requires digging, which likely can't be done until April.

Being "ready to order service" means just that – it does not mean that the connection to your house will be done. Usually the time required from "order" to "active line" is just 3 days. But with 770+ pre-orders already, it could be a week or so to get everyone connected.

**The number of pre-orders needs to increase.** Go to [Fidiumfiber.com](http://Fidiumfiber.com) to sign up. There have been a few changes to the website, so if you have problems, please contact me. It doesn't hurt to sign up yet again! If your address isn't showing up in the dropdown menu, be sure you have used all capital letters, and no punctuation, and RD instead of ROAD. In other words, your address needs to match exactly the 9-1-1 road address. If you have done all this and still have problems despite my best efforts to help, we need to contact Sarah Davis and she will personally oversee the troubleshooting.

Regarding ordering service: if you have pre-ordered, you will be notified by email when you can actually order.

IF you already have CCI's DSL service, you will need to make a phone call to schedule and confirm your order. IF you are a NEW customer to CCI, and don't already have their DSL service, you can complete your order online. If you are already enrolled in CCI's Affordable Connectivity Program, Fidium thinks your account will automatically roll over to Fidium without your needing to re-apply, but this is being verified.

So, I am sorry to bring the bad tidings about the short stretch of undersea cable that is putting Brooksville at a disadvantage relative to our sister towns, but c'est la vie. I suspect the scam artist going door to door has already stopped doing that, but if not, with your help, they will be stopped.

Hi folks

Perhaps good news as we wrap up the year 2022!

I don't have written confirmation yet, but I have been informed that the NTIA-NEPA approval process is over and done, with a green light for the Mountains to the Sea project - even including that pesky undersea cable.

I will share details when they are available.

Meanwhile, be sure you have signed up to receive information about service from Fidium. (The web address is [fidiumfiber.com](http://fidiumfiber.com), then click on the following sequence: fiber locations... maine... brooksville...pre-order) At long last, there is light at the end of the tunnel, and it's fiberoptic!

Cheers to you all, and have a wonderful new year.

Abbie



**Broadband News #42**  
**December 24, 2022**

Greetings and Happy Holidays

I was hoping to be able to send you an electronic “Christmas Present”, in the form of a definitive answer to when fiber will be rolling into Brooksville. Unfortunately I can’t do that.

The approval of our 8-town project is sitting on some bureaucrat’s desk, awaiting signature. We’ve been told that ALL the technical and environmental aspects of the project have been examined and approved. Fidium cannot access the funding without the Maine Connectivity Authority getting the green light to proceed. This is supposed to happen this month. Even so, the delay has meant that the original hoped-for 2022 rollout has been pushed into 2023 (by March 31 for most of us, unless there is a frozen underground situation for some of us).

The project was initially approved LAST FEBRUARY (See Broadband News #32). Instead of granting a “categorical exception” to the environmental review process (which in my opinion was clearly appropriate), the project had to undergo an unexpected review under NEPA (the National Environmental Policy Act). We heard that this was because of a stretch of the fiber that goes underwater from Castine to Brooksville. Even though the Maine state environmental reviewers approved the project entirely (including the underwater portion), it’s still bogged down in EPA in Washington, in something called the “grants office”.

It’s utterly maddening and I’m fed up. If approval isn’t granted by the end of this year, I am planning “active measures”. This may involve press releases, badgering our elected officials, and so forth. Let me know if you have any insights on the most effective measures we could undertake. I am not prone to conspiracy theories, but the ridiculousness of this situation coupled with the outsized influence peddling by major stakeholders does cause one to speculate.

Hopefully, by December 31, we will have positive news. As soon as I receive it, you will hear from me again.

Meanwhile, please stay warm and healthy. The darkest day of the year has passed, and the sun is on its way back - or, to be more accurate, the earth is turning its northern part more toward the sun.

yours,  
Abbie

## Broadband News #41

8 November 2022

Hi there! it's been a while since I updated you. That's because there isn't much new since September.

The State granted an underwater permit for the Castine/Brooksville fiber cable back in September. Specifically, according to state NEPA review person: "A Submerged Lands Lease was issued on September 14, 2022. The Bureau went straight to Final Findings rather than Preliminary Findings because there were no formal objections to the project."

However, for some unfathomable reason the feds have yet to greenlight our 7-town part of the overall project. According to Maine Connectivity Authority: "The Mountains to the Sea projects are almost out of the federally mandated environmental and tribal review stage. This involves a request for public feedback that lasts 60 days and began on September 8, 2022. This means that November 7, 2022 is the estimated date that most projects will be able to proceed. Blue Hill is the one exception, with planned underwater deployment that requires more environmental review, so this project has an estimated time for proceeding of December 22, 2022. There are many factors that affect when projects might finish, but we know that CCI is very anxious to complete this one on Blue Hill Peninsula as quickly as possible.

Sarah at CCI said a few days ago: " I checked in with the NEPA contractor and everything for Blue Hill has been submitted and should be all set, we just need to wait to hear back" She also says " I am not overstating it when I say we are chomping at the bit. WE have people idle that want to build." Another person from CCI told Joel Katz " The Fidium build for the peninsula has been moved to 1Q 2023 at least on the distribution end. Some of the resources were moved to other areas of the state this fall while we waited for the mandatory environmental impact study, however we have been moving forward with upgrading central offices in the area and building the 100g backhaul ring across the peninsula. Most of the equipment and cable that had been hard to get arrived in Ellsworth this summer and is still sitting there in our yard."

So we are looking at a possible Dec 22 start date for construction. I'm definitely not satisfied with the "explanation" of this unnecessary delay. WHAT IS EPA WAITING FOR? Note that "1Q 2023" could be any time from Jan. 1 to March 31. This is a hardship for people facing termination of existing service contracts (e.g. from Premium Choice or Hughes) and will cut into the take rate for Fidium, if those customers get committed to alternatives.

I hope when the approval finally comes, that CCI has the materials and manpower lined up locally to finish the installation in record time!

Meanwhile, Brooksville Library has been busy with useful internet courses. Contact Brook Minner (326-4560) to find out more. I'll send along more info from Doug when he gets back from roaming the planet. "Cutting the cord" and "internet safety" courses have already been held.

Don't hesitate to ask questions. As always, I'll try to get answers.

**Broadband News #40**  
**20 September 2022**

Hello everyone

I wish I had better news to report.

The Fidium project is being delayed, largely due to “environmental review”. Part of that review concerns laying a new, undersea fiber cable VIRTUALLY CONTIGUOUS to an existing cable that brings copper wires from Castine to S. Wharf Rd. in West Brooksville. If you want to see a map and the environmental review notice, they were attached to one of Gayle Clifford’s emails a month or so ago. Below in blue typeface is an email I sent responding to the public comment opportunity, **which has passed.**

Honestly, in any reasonable universe, the regulators should be able to see quickly that the new cable has no impact beyond what is already there and has been there for decades. Why it is going to take until December to figure this out is puzzling. It’s not that they haven’t had the opportunity to make this determination since what, February when the NTIA grant was awarded? There may be other environmental considerations under review in other locations - after all, the project is being implemented in other parts of Maine as well - but this particular glitch is awfully close to home. However, one would think that the approval could be granted for the other parts of the project that don’t trigger environmental review, while the cable situation gets sorted.

The delay and its impact on you are outlined here: <https://www.peninsulautility4broadband.org/whats-happening.html> . **Please read this link first**, and then email me with your questions and thoughts. If a general community response becomes warranted or useful, you can be sure that your assistance will be requested forthwith.

Abbie

To: Karen L, Foust, Bureau of Parks and Lands  
From: Abbie McMillen, co Chair, Brooksville Broadband Committee  
Date: September 6, 2022  
Dear Ms. Foust:

**Pursuant to the notice of August 11, which is attached, here are my comments for the record.**

I am familiar with the site. The existing cable is virtually undetectable. It causes absolutely no issues that I am aware of, either in the water or on land, anywhere, including for any purpose listed in the attached notice.

In addition, the connection afforded by the existing cable is VITAL AND ESSENTIAL for phone service to parts of Brooksville, including Cape Rosier. You may be aware that copper phone lines are being phased out in favor of fiber, because copper is higher maintenance and more unreliable. This fiber cable is the future of our communication infrastructure!

But in the meantime, the copper lines must be properly maintained. We have had severe issues in Brooksville in the past due to poor performance of copper phone lines, issues severe enough to result in PUC intervention.

People in parts of Brooksville that are and will be served by these cables (the existing copper and the new fiber) are eagerly looking forward to improvements in both our phone service and our dreadful internet situation.

These improvements are ESSENTIAL for our economy, the education of our young people, our health care, our property values, our pristine rural environment, our ability to access emergency services like ambulances, police and firemen.

Concerning internet, we are so truly disadvantaged that considerable federal and state money has been allocated to CCI to alleviate our situation. Therefore it is ESSENTIAL that this fiber cable be installed to supplant the existing copper cable and provide fiber internet to us. For some of us, the fiber line could become our only communication lifeline to the wider world, for both internet and phone, within a few years. To delay the installation of this fiber cable FOR ANY REASON is to jeopardize the installation of fiber for a part of Brooksville that has been left far behind when it comes to internet.

If a delay happens, we could experience construction delays due to weather conditions. THIS WOULD BE TRAGIC.

Our understanding is that all necessary rights-of-way and pre-existing permits are in place and valid, We are aware that abutters have given their approval, repeatedly, for the fiber cable. Issues concerning road construction are not relevant to the fiber cable. Therefore, we URGE and IMPLORE you to expedite this project by any means at your disposal. PLEASE issue the needed permit ASAP!

Thank you for your consideration.

Abbie McMillen Co-Chair, Brooksville Broadband Committee  
207 326 8022

## Broadband News #39

19 August 2022

This morning, representatives from the “Mountains to the Sea” project on the Blue Hill peninsula had a Zoom update session with four senior representatives from Fidium, aka “Team CCI”, including 2 construction managers and 2 governmental liaison folks. We learned that the project involves 245 miles of “trunk line” fiber (2 of which are underground) and 10,549 “passings” (i.e. structures that might want internet). The project is still stalled in NEPA review but is expected to be released within 30 days (or perhaps up to 60 days) after which there is a 2 to 3 month buildout time before you can actually get your service. If you see trucks installing fiber on poles now, they are working in advance of the EPA approval in areas that were funded through a different program (“RDOF”) that doesn’t need the approval. However, customers in those areas will be hooked up at the same time as everyone else, not earlier. If your site has specific issues with an inadequate conduit, or if you need to install poles, there may be more delay, and you need to confer with Fidium about your specific case. You can email [Simon.Thorne@consolidated.com](mailto:Simon.Thorne@consolidated.com) and describe your situation. By now, if you suspect you have a problem conduit, you are hopefully well into fixing that problem.

If you have tried repeatedly to sign up to be notified when service will be coming to your location (by following the exact procedures outlined in my newsletter #37) and have failed to get through to receive a receipt saying your request was received, you can email Simon Thorne or Sarah Davis directly. They are working to resolve these addressing questions. Their emails are [Simon.Thorne@consolidated.com](mailto:Simon.Thorne@consolidated.com) and [sarah\\_davis@consolidated.com](mailto:sarah_davis@consolidated.com). But please try again first by yourself, using your exact 9-1-1 address, with all caps, specific abbreviations, and no punctuation! (I might be able to help you get through this: email me.) You should be getting a notice about 45 days before you can actually sign up, and again about 30 days in advance of signup. This should give you time to contemplate which level of service you want to subscribe to, get your battery backup if desired, etc. At the bottom of this newsletter is a synopsis of available plans (reproduced with permission).

**Battery backup** (especially for VOIP) is a good idea especially if you don’t have a generator serving the outlet(s) that the Fidium equipment needs to plug into. What are those outlets, you ask? The one we discussed in Newsletter #36 which serves the Network Interface Device (NID), and the outlet that your router will be plugged into, which possibly will be located some distance from the NID. Now, if you don’t care whether your internet works during a power outage, but you want the VOIP phone to work, you will need to be sure the NID is powered by a battery backup, but you can skip the router outlet. (We are still trying to figure out if one battery backup will power both phone and internet, and we will let you know what we find out.) Fidium has an arrangement with a battery backup company, with a website here: <https://www.fidiumfiber.com/Support/phone/battery-backup-for-fidium-voip-phone-line>. The writeup on that website is confusing, but here’s the bottom line: if you purchase one of the first three backups listed on that webpage (i.e. the “8 hour solution” for \$99.95, or the “16 hour solution” for \$199.95, or the “24 hour solution” for \$299.95) and you have the device physically at your home on the day the Fidium installers come to set up your fiber connection, the installers will hook up your battery backup at the same time. Any of those three options is a complete battery backup device. If you look at the pictures closely, you will see that they differ only in the number of batteries (one, two or three of them.) YOU DO NOT HAVE TO purchase one of these makes and models. If you decide to use a different battery backup, you can go ahead and have that one available and the installers will hook it up for you. If any tech savvy person has a better battery backup recommendation to pass along to us, please let me know. The advantage of using this company is only that they have worked with CCI to be sure the devices are compatible.

**Existing “CCI business fiber” customers** will indeed need to live out the terms of their contract before they can transition to residential Fidium fiber. This is because there are extra service features built into the business contract. Places like fire stations will probably want to retain these features, and thus would not want to transfer to the residential plan in any case. CCI is developing a “small business” model for customers with approximately 2 phone numbers and less than 25 employees, but it won’t be offered until 2023 and probably won’t contain the same special service features that are in the current business contracts. Stay tuned if this applies to your business. It could apply, for instance, to the Town Office, an internet cafe, a market with restaurant seating - but probably is not needed for a plumber or a crafts outlet, architect etc which could use residential Fidium fiber.

**For Seasonal residents** or those leaving town for an extended period: Fidium offers a “suspend and restore” process for when you are not in residence. It applies to both internet and phone. Details are here: <https://www.fidiumfiber.com/support/account/vacation-suspend-or-restore>.

**To CCI's DSL Customers:** Sarah Davis has clarified that to switch from CCI copper internet to Fidium fiber internet, or from copper land line phone to VOIP, **you will have to call them**. She says, " To convert from DSL to Fidium you will need to call you can't place this order on the web. Once you call and place the order it will all be automatic and the DSL will be cancelled once the technician installs Fidium." She also says that you can call either Fidium directly or the customer service number on your CCI bill, because all customer service reps should know what to do, to put you on the list to have your DSL cancelled as soon as your Fidium is up and running. CCI strongly discourages running both VOIP and copper land line phones at the same time, for reasons discussed in Newsletter #38. (again, all past newsletters are on the Town website.)

On the Zoom call this morning, Doug Cowan asked if Fidium had partnered with the National Digital Equity Center, and Sarah said that was a great idea and she would follow up on it. In our next newsletter, Doug will describe the NDEC courses he has arranged for Brooksville residents! Super cool! Brooksville ahead of the curve - again!

If you want to learn about the difference between Starlink and fiber, check out this page: <https://www.peninsulautility4broadband.org/qa.html> . Lots of other questions answered there, as well.

Finally, The Brooksville Historical Society annual meeting is going to feature a presentation from representatives of The Telephone Museum in Ellsworth. Their website is here: <https://thetelephonemuseum.org> (You didn't know it existed? Neither did I, and it looks like a fun family day trip!) Yours truly will be making a few remarks about the future of communication, also. The meeting will be at the Town House (in the meeting room next to the offices) on **SUNDAY AUGUST 28** starting promptly at 7 pm. There will be light refreshments. It promises to be an informal and nostalgic look at telecommunications from the 1870s to the present - and beyond. There is no attendance fee, donations are appreciated.

The infographic displays four home fiber internet plans from Fidium. The plans are arranged in a 2x2 grid. The top-left plan is '2 Gigs' at \$165/mo, with a 1-year rate lock (\$190/mo after), \$199 installation, no contract, and 'Futuristic' service. The top-right plan is '1 Gig' at \$70/mo, with a 1-year rate lock (\$95/mo after), free installation, no contract, and 'Supreme' service. A green circle labeled 'Most Popular' is next to the 1 Gig plan. The bottom-left plan is '250 Mbps' at \$65/mo, with a 1-year rate lock (\$85/mo after), free installation, no contract, and 'Advanced' service. The bottom-right plan is '50 Mbps' at \$35/mo, with a 1-year rate lock (\$65/mo after), free installation, no contract, and 'Essential' service. To the right of the plans, a list of features is provided: 'All plans include: WiFi 6 gateway (to enable faster speeds and wider coverage), WiFi extenders (we provide 2, plus additional extenders if needed), Whole-home WiFi app (to put you in control), Proactive network monitoring (to help resolve any issues), Professional installation (for speeds up to 1 Gig (\$199 for 2 Gigs)), and \$5 discount with subscription (to Paperless Billing and AutoPay)'. The Fidium logo is in the top right corner. At the bottom left, it says 'CONFIDENTIAL AND PROPRIETARY -- ONLY FOR INTERNAL USE'.

Plan	Speed	Price	Rate Lock	Installation	Contract	Service Level
2 Gigs	2 Gigs	\$165/mo	1-year rate lock (\$190/mo after)	\$199	No contract	Futuristic
1 Gig	1 Gig	\$70/mo	1-year rate lock (\$95/mo after)	FREE	No contract	Supreme
250 Mbps	250 Mbps	\$65/mo	1-year rate lock (\$85/mo after)	FREE	No contract	Advanced
50 Mbps	50 Mbps	\$35/mo	1-year rate lock (\$65/mo after)	FREE	No contract	Essential

**All plans include:**

- WiFi 6 gateway** to enable faster speeds and wider coverage
- WiFi extenders** we provide 2, plus additional extenders if needed
- Whole-home WiFi app** to put you in control
- Proactive network monitoring** to help resolve any issues
- Professional installation** for speeds up to 1 Gig (\$199 for 2 Gigs)
- \$5 discount with subscription** to Paperless Billing and AutoPay

CONFIDENTIAL AND PROPRIETARY -- ONLY FOR INTERNAL USE

Hi Everybody!

By now you have certainly filled out the Fidium form (see Broadband News #37 for details) and received an acknowledgement in your email. WHAAAT? You forgot??? Well, the time to do it is NOW. Again, it's not a commitment on your part; it's just to get on the list for information specific to your address. Let me know if you need another copy of News #37.

Meanwhile, while we await the fiber trucks, I've been asked several connection questions for both internet and VOIP (voice over internet phone). Here they are, with answers direct from Fidium, **in blue typeface**. Edits for clarity shown in italics: some bold type added for emphasis.

**Q 1.** WHEN will the service be available?

"We are waiting on the federal NEPA and cannot begin construction until that is approved. Anything more specific would be little more than a guess."

There is more information on this question, provided by Peggy Schaffer of ConnectME, the agency that applied for and was awarded the funds. The short take is that the funding has not been received yet, because of mandatory environmental review. CCI and ConnectME are hopeful that the required review will be completed in August because, after all, the work should qualify for what is known as a "categorical exception" (like, for example, rebuilding a trail, an example cited in descriptions of the NEPA process.)

**Q 2.** What is the exact transition process for people who have CCI DSL and want to transition to Fidium? Is it seamless, i.e. when they sign up for Fidium, as soon as it is installed and functioning, will the billing switch over from CCI to Fidium and will the last CCI bill be a pro-rata share of months' worth of DSL service? Or does the customer have to notify CCI to cancel the DSL?

"This is a conversion order. It is designed keep the DSL up and working until the Fidium tech is on site. Once the tech is on site for the install they will swap over anything that is needed and complete the install. Once the install is complete it will then trigger the delete order on the DSL to complete. This will then generate a final bill from CCI and a new Fidium bill. Both bills are prorated. The CCI bill is usually in advance and that means we would issue a partial refund based on disconnection and the billing cycle. Same with Fidium. **We bill one month in advance so we bill the partial month and one month in advance.**

**Q 3.** If the customer also signs up for VOIP, do they have to notify CCI to shut off their landline phone service, or is that automatic?

"This would happen at the time of install. They would disconnect the POTS line and install VoIP (Fidium Hosted Voice). [Editor note: "POTS" stands for, believe it or not, Plain Old Telephone Service!] This is also part of the conversion order and would work the same way [The telephone] Will stay working on the copper line until we are on site to install the fiber and VoIP for the customer.

**Q 4.** Is Fidium selling battery backups, either on a rental or purchase basis? If so is there info on costs and models available from Fidium, or recommendations on other units to be provided by the customer? If supplied by Fidium, will battery backup be available the instant that the VOIP phone is connected? If supplied by the customer, will the Fidium installers work with the homeowner to be sure the connections are functioning? "Here is the link for battery back-up: <https://www.fidiumfiber.com/support/phone/battery-backup-for-fidium-voip-phone-line> The customer is responsible for purchase, installation and maintenance. If the customer has the battery at the home on install [i.e. when the Fidium technician is doing the work at your home] the tech will help set it up."

**Q 5.** I think I heard that the customer can use the same phones that they already have, as well as the same phone numbers and answering machines. Please confirm.

"Customers can use the phones they have, most can accept VOIP call. **Customers cannot use rotary phones.** We can port the Telephone Number to Fidium, but a new account would be generated. They can use answering machines, but Hosted Voice does come with a Voicemail system."

**Q 6.** I know you understand the fact that a lot of your customers here are elderly with medical issues and poor cell phone coverage, and they need a reliable phone in emergencies. If they opt to retain their copper landlines, what assurances do they have that CCI will maintain those lines adequately going forward?

"Consolidated is still a regulated utility with respect to telephone service. As such there is service quality metrics we are held to. **With respect to specifically maintaining copper going forward, we do not have immediate plans to retire the copper but at some point that will happen. Maintaining two networks is not efficient and most of the legacy equipment is near end of life without replacement parts.**" [Emphasis added. Let's help our elderly get ready for this! This phase-out likely also applies to copper-based DSL as well as phone lines.]

**Q 7.** In the case where there are two different phone numbers in the same house (e.g. "his and hers" phones), will there be two VOIP bills? Can both phones be used simultaneously?

"The customer would receive one invoice for both telephone numbers. Yes, both lines can be used at the same time. Fidium can support internet and 2 VoIP tns. No more than 2. This would all be on the same bill and yes they would be used independently and simultaneously."

So, friends, the writing is on the wall - copper is being phased out and fiber is the future. It may be difficult for some of our friends and neighbors to adapt, so let's all help each other face this reality. It should be a benefit in the long run, once we get used to it. And VOIP certainly seems to present a cost saving.

The battery backup webpage linked above (Q. 4) should be read carefully. If you have a generator, even one that comes on automatically, when the power goes out there will be a brief period where your VOIP won't work and you may at that very moment be on an important call that gets disconnected. However, if you ALSO have battery backup (i.e. a UPS - Uninterruptible Power Supply), your phone reconnect should be instantaneous. Also important, if your generator does NOT come on automatically, the battery backup will give you time to go out to the garage and start your portable generator, and you will also be able to report your power outage to Versant!. You will have to be sure that your VOIP is on a circuit that the generator serves. In my case, it means we will have to rewire the generator panel, but you may not have to do that - you may be able to locate your internet interface near an outlet served by your generator. Another advantage of the battery backup is that it provides surge protection when the power comes back on.

If I get more information about the NEPA Environmental Review, I will let you know. Also, if you have more questions, I will be happy to go get the answers, because if you have a question, chances are good that others reading this newsletter will have the same question! If you do happen to contact Fidium directly and get an answer, please let us know the question you asked and what you found out, so we can all be better informed! Thanks!

Cheers and onward! Raspberries are ripe!

**Broadband News # 37**  
**July 8, 2022**

Happy Summer everyone!

Regarding Digital Learning: I hope you all saw the article about Doug's digital literacy/equity project in the June 30 print edition of the Weekly Packet. Once again, Brooksville leads the way! I cannot find an online version of it, but the title is "Computer Literacy for Everyone" and it appears on page 7. It's a really good article, written by Maggie White. (Maggie also lives in Brooksville, in one of our unserved internet areas.) She kindly arranged to send me a PDF of the relevant page, attached at the end of this newsletter. The PDF is courtesy of Penobscot Bay Press Community Information Services, <https://penobscotbaypress.com/>.

**Regarding signup to be notified of the availability of Fidium service:** If you have already submitted your contact info to Fidium, our current thinking is that you should DO IT AGAIN because their website has changed and "what could possibly go wrong??" PLUS WE THINK THAT THOSE NEIGHBORHOODS WHERE THERE IS A LOT OF INTEREST MIGHT BE PRIORITIZED, so there is every reason to contact your neighbors and get them to sign up too!

Here are the steps:

1. Log on to [fidiumfiber.com](http://fidiumfiber.com)
2. In the upper right corner, click on "check availability"
3. Scroll down to Maine (a plus sign on the left of the word) and select it
4. Scroll down to Brooksville and select it
5. On the picture with the lovely young lady, there is a blue button "Pre-Order". Click on that.
6. Enter your service address. If it doesn't work the first time, try different spellings, e.g. use "Ln" instead of Lane, "Rd" instead of Road. (In my case, I had to type in my road address and then Harborside ME 04642 and it found me.)
7. Scroll down and fill out the information requested. Name, email and phone(s). (In my case, it changed Harborside to Brooksville for the address, and I let that slide, figuring there was some reason for the change. It kept the 04642 zipcode.)
8. Click the "I am not a robot" box at the bottom
9. Click "continue" below that
10. Your information will come up to be reviewed. Hit SUBMIT at the bottom of that page. It will tell you "You will hear from us soon to schedule installation". **You will get a confirmation notice in your email inbox**, which says that you will be notified about 2 weeks before they are coming to hook up. You have not requested any particular level of service at this point, so there is no cost or obligation until you actually sign up. If you don't get that confirmation notice, try the whole process again. If you still have problems, let me know.

We hear that hookups will occur in the fall. There were some potential environmental questions under the NEPA (National Environmental Policy Act) review, concerning wetland crossings. (As we know, in Brooksville there are poles in swamps.) Also, people with "problem conduits" may have to wait until the microtrencher can get to you, possibly next year, as discussed in previous newsletters. (In my case, our new conduit is fully installed and ready!) Also, Fidium has a LOT going on in dozens of Maine towns. It's possible they may have to scramble to find qualified subcontractors. But so far, we have not been alerted to specific issues regarding labor or materials availability.

**Regarding Fidium's progress in town:** Current phone service in parts of Harborside and Brooksville comes underwater through a cable from Castine. Dick Gregor on S. Wharf Rd wrote this on June 25: "Consolidated et al were here yesterday to scope out the crossing for a new fiber cable connection from Castine to Brooksville. Current schedule is for October, but this is the first feet I have seen on the ground." Thanks for the update, Dick. Everyone please let us know if and when you see CCI trucks or their subcontractors actually installing fiber in town! They will probably get all the major lines installed before they start connecting customers, but that's just a supposition.

**Regarding home based businesses:** what we have heard is that if your business is physically located in your home (e.g. architect, writer, doctor), you can use normal Fidium fiber and not have to sign up for CCI "business fiber". For those who, in desperation, have already installed "business fiber" with a multi-year contract, the scuttlebutt is that you will have to live out that contract with CCI before you can switch to a home plan. You know who you are, and I would love to hear from you. I have to wonder if there isn't some wiggle room for you if you get yourselves together to negotiate with CCI/Fidium? Let me know if you want to contact others in your situation.

**Regarding Squirrels – of all things!** - they are proving to be a problem for fiber lines. Apparently they like to chew the plastic coating. They jump from trees onto the lines, so the best thing to do – even if it is visually unappealing – is to clear tree branches away from the lines. This is something a homeowner/landowner can do, or encourage.

Off to pick peas!





## Broadband News #36

17 May 2022

Greetings to (now 475) friends of better broadband for Brooksville!

We are NOT just sitting around waiting for Fidium to come spooling down the many roads of Brooksville!

This newsletter has two parts:

**Part A** concerns digital literacy, the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) etc, in other words, things you or your friends and neighbors might like to know to take full advantage of the coming “Brooksville digital revolution”.

**Part B** concerns technical aspects of the Fidium Fiber connection, particularly in-house equipment, and conduits.

**PART A by Doug Cowan**

### **High speed internet is coming to Brooksville!**

Low cost, high speed internet will be available to any homeowner in Brooksville by the end of the year through an affiliate of Consolidated Communications, **Fidium Fiber**. If you haven't done so already, sign up with **Fidium Fiber** to get email updates on how installation is progressing in Brooksville. Go to <https://www.fidiumfiber.com/Fiber-Locations>, click on the “+” sign in front of “MAINE”, click on “Brooksville” and sign up for updates. You don't have to choose your speed now.

### **Financial considerations**

If you qualify, the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) provides a \$30 discount on monthly charges for internet, and the Lifeline program provides a \$10 discount on monthly telephone charges. When fiber comes to Brooksville, the basic first year monthly charge for 50Mbps/50Mbps (the least expensive option - which is adequate for almost everyone -) will be \$35/month, which would get discounted to \$5/month with the \$30 discount. If you qualify for the internet discount, you automatically qualify for the phone discount, which brings your phone bill down from \$15/month to \$5/month for unlimited calls in the US. (Compare that to what you pay now for internet and land based phone!) Fiber Installation is free with no contract to sign. Installing fiber to your home typically increases the value of your home by 3- 4%. If you currently have Direct TV, they offer to stream their programs over the internet at a reduced charge with no contract. There are other streaming services offering alternative options that might save you money. Here is a link to a good, user-friendly article explaining the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP):

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/technology/2022/03/03/affordable-connectivity-program-faq/>

You can see if you qualify (e.g. you have Mainecare, SNAP, WIC, subsidized school lunch, Lifeline, etc.), by reading the ACP Outreach Toolkit at: [https://www.fcc.gov/sites/default/files/affordableconnectivity\\_toolkit.pdf](https://www.fcc.gov/sites/default/files/affordableconnectivity_toolkit.pdf)

If you think you might qualify, you can apply for the ACP at:

<https://www.affordableconnectivity.gov/>. It is a good idea to apply ASAP and not wait for the fiber connection to come to you later this year, especially if you have Consolidated DSL internet currently. Once you are approved, the ACP discount will apply to your current service, and roll over to your new Fidium fiber service. This should happen “seamlessly” - we will stay on top of this to be sure it does.

ACP theoretically offers \$100 towards the purchase of a computer, laptop, or tablet to those who qualify, but currently NO internet service providers in Maine offer this program. BUT there is a different and arguably better program offered by the Machias-based *National Digital Equity Center (NDEC)*. Read on!

### **Digital Literacy considerations**

At-home internet is only useful if you have a computer/laptop, or tablet and know how to use it. The Machias-based *National Digital Equity Center (NDEC)* offers free online training in computer/laptop/tablet basics, which you can view at home (if you have adequate internet) or with a group of friends at the Brooksville library. Volunteers are available at NDEC to help you enroll and take courses. The link to the National Digital Equity Center homepage is here: <https://digitalequitycenter.org/our-strategies/>

To participate in the NDEC program, you first need to enroll. This is done online (by you or with assistance from someone who has internet access). The link is here: <https://digitalequitycenter.org/classes/enroll/> It is free to enroll for Maine homeowners or renters.

Once you have enrolled, you can sign up for classes. They are also free and cover many subjects, such as the basics of a computer, laptop, or tablet; information on internet safety; how to use specific computers, laptops or tablets; and some software programs that will be useful for you. You pick and choose the classes you want. There are 40 different online class offerings: you can scroll through the pages to find the classes you want to take. Here is the link to a list of current online class offerings:

<https://digitalequitycenter.org/classes/online-interactive> Currently there are no onsite classes in our area, (but there may be some in the future in Deer Isle.)

If you (or others you know in Brooksville) would like to volunteer to help NDEC with their programs, here is the link:

<https://digitalequitycenter.org/join-us/ndec-volunteer-tutor-program/>

Although no internet service providers in Maine are offering to help you purchase a device, the NDEC offers a free device to those who make a commitment to take several of their classes (so that they know you have the basics to use the device.) The criteria for acceptance into this program are similar to those for acceptance into the ACP as linked above. To apply for a device from NDEC, here is the link: <https://digitalequitycenter.org/request-device/>

If you have questions about any of the above, please contact us.

### **Be part of the Brooksville Digital Equity Team!**

We definitely could use volunteer assistance from anyone willing to help ALL of our interested homeowners become internet savvy. We are particularly interested in individuals who would be willing to go door to door in their neighborhood to talk to folks about the reasons to consider having internet and any concerns they might have. We also have a number of time-limited tasks to research and accomplish, namely

1. coordinate getting information out to all families with kids in the school
2. assist elderly and other residents with their chosen NDEC online courses, either at their homes or in the library
3. research options for battery backup for VOIP phones and help select the one or two models best suited for Brooksville residents

If you are willing to volunteer, contact:

Doug Cowan 837-1285 [cowandoug@gmail.com](mailto:cowandoug@gmail.com) or Brook Minner at 326-4560

### **PART B by Abbie**

#### **On conduits:**

We've had several experts look at our situation and they all concur that we will need a new conduit. Although we might be able to get away with a new, 1.5 inch diameter tube, we have decided to go with Fidium's recommended 2 inches. This is in the interest of "future proofing" our property. If we were to build another house or camp at some distance from our house, and it needed a connection, we would need the extra width in the primary conduit. We also explored the possibility of using different types of conduit tubing but settled on the recommended, gray-colored electrical version. (We had hoped there could be cost savings with other possible types of conduit we looked at, but all three electricians we consulted discouraged that idea.)

As far as pull boxes are concerned, these make the installation much, much easier, especially as we have some right angles turns in the route. We are getting two pull boxes. One of the experts we consulted is Peter Van der Eb, who lives in Brooksville and is willing to advise others on their conduit conundrums. Contact him at [pvandereb@harborviewservices.com](mailto:pvandereb@harborviewservices.com). He sent this picture of an in-ground pull box, about 2x3 ft across, which (because it's level with the ground) won't interfere with snowplowing. Our two boxes will be in-ground, but somewhat smaller. I'm glad we ignored the advice of those who said "don't worry about conduits, Fidium will make it work." However, your situation may pose a much less severe problem than ours, and you might be all set with your current conduit. I certainly hope so!

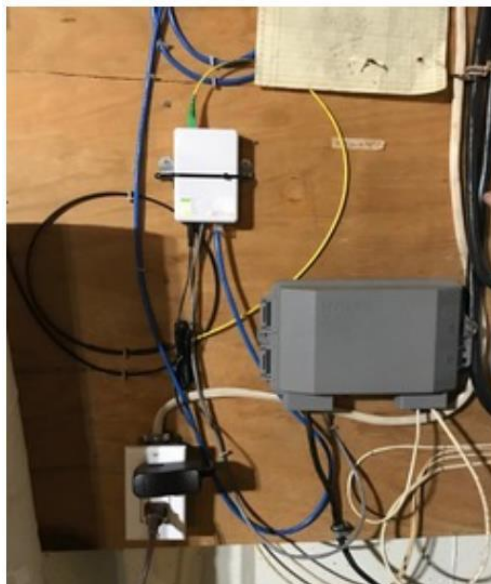


### **In-house equipment:**

We've been asked what the Fidium installation looks like. So I traveled to Stonington and visited one of the Select Board members, a VERY nice and intelligent lady! She had only good things to say about the Fidium workers: they were helpful, hard working, efficient and courteous.

She had conduit problems initially. Her existing tube was very narrow (looked to me to be about one inch outer diameter), and although the Fidium guys tried very hard to make it work, they couldn't. So she had the option of waiting until next spring, or going aerial. She decided on the latter, as the distance from her house to the nearest pole was quite short, on the order of 100 ft. (and with teens in the house there was significant urgency to get connected ASAP!) The aerial fiber wire is quite thin and unobtrusive, attaches to the eaves and runs almost invisibly down the side of the house and enters the basement.

The first picture shows the panel in the basement, where the fiber enters the house. The little white box is the "NID" - Network Interface Device. This needs to be reasonably close to a power outlet, which you can see below it. Next to it is a larger gray box, which is the telephone connection. Especially with the internet telephone replacing her landline, she reports a significant overall cost savings on her monthly communications bill.



This is the modem, located centrally in the house



And this little gizmo is one of two “mesh” units, basically a signal booster in various parts of the house.



I’m very grateful for the time she spent with me, and significantly reassured that better days are ahead (at least when it comes to internet connectivity).

Information on the specifics of the Fidium installation can be found here:

<https://www.fidiumfiber.com/fiber-internet-Brooksville-me> . It’s worth your time to read the entire webpage, and you might also want to read the terms and policies, here: <https://www.fidiumfiber.com/terms-policies> . Nobody likes to dive into these legalistic things, but it’s still a good idea to do so.

Please ask any questions you may have and we will try to get answers for you.

Happy spring! The world may be a mess, but Brooksville is lovely!

**Broadband News #35**  
**Conduits and More**  
**April 15, 2022**

Hello friends!

I had a very interesting and pleasant conversation with two Fidium reps Thursday morning, relaying your questions, primarily but not exclusively regarding conduits. Below are 10 questions and what I think I heard for answers. Fidium is willing to answer more questions if you have them. Send them to me and I will bundle them for the sake of efficiency. We want to keep those folks at Fidium minimally distracted, so they can stay focused on getting the job done this year!

The answers all sound reasonable and understandable to me, so far.

One of these days while I'm over on Deer Isle, I plan to scoot over to Stonington and take a few photos of sample Fidium installations outside of homes, i.e. where the fiber meets the house. (If I can discern them and the homeowners don't object.)

Here is something you will eventually want to read carefully: [Terms of Service | Fidium Fiber](#)

Have a great weekend! Spring is here! Abbie

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**1. We have direct burial phone lines, no conduit. What can be done for us?**

You will need to put in poles or a conduit.

Or, if you estimate that this will be too costly for you, you could wait until after the fiber network in your neighborhood is up and running, hopefully by the end of 2022. Then, after the ground thaws in the spring of 2023, Fidium will have available a new gizmo called a microtrencher ([micro trenching - Wiktionary](#)). If Fidium determines that there is a technically and legally suitable pathway leading to your house, Fidium is prepared to place conduit pre-filled with fiber **for 250 feet free of charge and \$2/foot thereafter**. The path would be determined by Fidium personnel and is not necessarily a straight shot to the home, but rather one that is determined as the best option to provide service. However, there would need to be several customers (3 or 4) in the same general area needing this option so the microtrencher can be deployed efficiently. Technical suitability means the absence of having to cross a pond, or a lot of ledge, or through a dense forest. Legal suitability means the route is agreeable to both you and Fidium, and any needed easements over neighbors' land are in place. Also, although Fidium is pre-purchasing a certain amount of this pre-filled conduit, there may be a limited availability in the future at that price. Again, you won't be able to sign up for this option until after the network is up and running, and it will require in-field planning in cooperation with you. But just based on the current price of conduit this is going to be the least expensive option. (I don't know about poles.)

**2. We are off the grid, have never had a wired connection. What can be done for us?**

See answer to question 1.

**3. It looks like our phone line and electric line are in the same conduit.**

Are you sure about this? This is an unsafe configuration and should never have been built in the first place. Fidium cannot work with this. You will have to separate them (safely!), or make a new pathway (pole or conduit). See answer to question 1

**4. Our phone comes partway down our driveway on poles, and then goes underground. Is there a problem with this?**

Probably not. This is a fairly common configuration and Fidium has installed fiber successfully in this situation.

**5. Our poles, power, phone line and/or conduit cross neighboring properties. Is this a problem?**

Probably not. You should review the terms of your easement over that property, though, and be sure your neighbor is aware that you intend to have fiber installed, so when the crew comes to do the work, everyone knows what's going on.

**6. Our existing conduit is full of other wires and we don't know what they are, or were. Will Fidium figure it out for us?**

Fidium won't remove any wires that weren't originally put there by Verizon/Fairpoint or CCI. You can have that done if you have concerns that there are redundant wires, or your conduit is too narrow for yet another line. (The "gold standard" would be a 2 inch diameter dedicated conduit with no right angles, a "pull string", and the presence of pull boxes every 480 feet or so, but Fidium has been able to work with less attractive conduits.) One of your existing lines could be used to help pull the fiber through the conduit (as a "pull string"), provided it was a Fairpoint/CCI line, which Fidium should be able to determine in the field.

7. What happens if the Fidium installer encounters a problem or blockage preventing the fiber from being pulled through the existing conduit? This could occur (and has occurred locally) when there is a damaged/broken conduit, even though the phone signal coming through that conduit has not been affected. Is there any way to pre-determine if there is going to be a problem?

Unfortunately, there is no diagnostic method available to determine broken/damaged conduit. When the installer encounters this problem in the field, it will require the services of a different engineering department at Fidium/CCI to work with the homeowner to diagnose and fix the problem. This will result in a delay hooking up the service while the problem gets sorted and a solution found.

8 When the fiber is scheduled to come to my house, do I need to be home?

Yes, the homeowner or their designee needs to be involved and present. For one thing, the “gateway”(modem) ideally should be located central to the place where most of the internet activity in the building occurs. That may be some distance from where the fiber actually enters the structure. So someone needs to be there to work with the Fidium installers on placement. The Network Interface Device ([Network interface device - Wikipedia](#)) will need to be powered and should be located near an outlet.

9. What will be the fate of DSL? Will it be abandoned?

Probably eventually. Within a few years there will be a complete transition to fiber. (And why not?) So, if your strategy is to wait and see if your DSL improves as other customers leave to join the fiber network, be advised that within a few years you may see an inevitable loss or degradation of DSL service. Note that, unlike phone service, there is no regulatory/PUC requirement that CCI or Fidium provide internet service.

10. The rates for phone service over internet (“VOIP”) seem very attractive. If we sign up for this service, can we keep our existing phone numbers?

Yes

Broadband News #34  
(originally mislabeled as #33)  
April 11, 2022

Dear Broadband friends

Well, we do, finally, have news to report!

1. BROOKSVILLE is now officially on the Fidium site! NOW, finally, there's an official place where you can put in your contact info to get updates. You might have done this before, but it doesn't hurt to do it again, now that there's a form online that you can fill out. Go to

<https://www.fidiumfiber.com/fiber-town?t=Brooksville&s=ME>

2. Our booklet of letters/thank you notes was very well received by the funding officials at the April 4 meeting in Blue Hill. Sometimes I think they hear a lot of complaining but get little thanks when they do something to help. Barbara Blake-Chapman, who fearlessly spoke to the crowd about the importance of broadband for retaining our young people, told Governor Mills that I was the person responsible for putting the booklet together, so the Governor asked me to sign her copy – (gulp). I'll try to pdf the entire thing and post it somewhere on the Town broadband webpage. Lots of terrific letters in it.

3. The Fidium promise still is to have everyone hooked up by the end of the year. This should be readily possible for anyone with an aerial connection (phone wires on poles to your house).

People with “difficult conduits” or no current wired path, though, should stay tuned as I'm still trying to pin down exactly what is being promised to be done “at no cost to the homeowner by the end of the year”. A “difficult conduit” (my term, not Fidium's) is old, less than 2 inches diameter, full of other “stuff”, containing right angle bends, and with no pull boxes if it's very long. We had ours looked at by both an electrician and an excavator guy. It's definitely less than 2 inches, has other wires in it, has unknown bend angles, and no pull boxes (it's over 1000 ft) and no pull “string” already in place. We've decided to have a better conduit installed because we do not want to wait! We want to be served just as soon as fiber starts rolling down our road, and we know the excavator guys are getting booked. You may not need to do this, though, and it's undoubtedly going to be expensive. It would be a shame to do it and discover you didn't need to. I suggest consulting with your electrician, and/or Peter VanderEb who has lots of experience with this. At some point, maybe, Fidium will invest in a person to help evaluate individual situations. We keep suggesting it.

It would be very useful if your phone line runs through a conduit if you would let me know, so I can put you on a special mailing list for the latest on this issue.

Keeping fingers crossed for all of us! Happy to receive your questions and try to get answers.

Abbie

**Broadband News #33**  
**March 12, 2022**

Greetings!

As I mentioned in the last newsletter, we met with CCI on Friday March 11. My Hughes satellite decided to vacillate between connected and not connected throughout the meeting, so I probably missed half of the discussion. But here is what I learned (subject to correction from those who might have heard more!) :

Fidium fiber will start accepting signups for service sometime in the next few months. But, if you send in your email address, they can put you on a list to be notified directly by email as soon as it's possible to sign up. This morning, I was able to add my address to their contact list here: <https://www.fidiumfiber.com/contact-us> . After adding your information in the form, scroll down, select "new Fiber Internet Service" from the dropdown, and in the message box you could write something like "please notify me directly as soon as we can sign up for future fiber internet service". (You will have already put your address in the form.) You should get an automatic reply saying they got your message.

Construction should commence here around June or July. They are still targeting finishing by the end of this year.

It is not yet known if CCI will be offering a seasonal disconnect arrangement. They are thinking about it.

If your phone line and/or electric line comes to your house via poles, you should be all set, with "no installation charge". (I'm still trying to determine what the costs will be for "extra wifi extenders" etc.) If you have a conduit, you will be responsible to assure that it meets CCI's technical specifications. Those specs are being written up and should be available within a month. I will let you know as soon as I get them. If you have difficulty determining whether your conduit is adequate, let me know. My conduit is pretty long, has electricity and two phone lines in it, so I am laser focused on this issue!

You can switch to the fiber line for your telephone service, if you want to. The cost saving should be pretty good compared to your land line service. (However, you should get a battery backup in case of a power outage.) Existing copper landline phone service should continue to be available. CCI is the "phone service provider of last resort" under PUC regulations, so they are not abandoning that service. If your phone line goes through a conduit, they will not be removing the copper when they put in fiber, CCI's argument being that "in the future somebody might want it."

We have other questions that either weren't covered, or I didn't hear the answers due to wonky internet! When I know more, I will let you know.

Meanwhile, continue with your questions! I will try to get answers. And thank you! Relief is in sight, and, together, we will get there.

~ Abbie

p.s. The Town Meeting did vote in the affirmative to set aside \$10K in case the broadband account needs it. No problems are anticipated requiring expenditure from this allocation, but with contracts not yet signed between and among the federal government, the state government, and CCI, you never know. "Semper paratus!"

This is the website that fidium set up for Stonington's rollout, which is now accepting subscribers in part of that town: <https://www.fidiumfiber.com/fiber-internet-Stonington-me> It's interesting, shows rates, what's included in the rate, etc. Suggest scrolling down to the place where it shows work phases that take place before signup. I think each town will get its own website similar to this one.

And, here's Ethan Genter's article in the BDN, about the NTIA funding. [Blue Hill peninsula will get piece of \\$28M funding for faster internet \(bangordailynews.com\)](#)



## Broadband News #32

March 4th 2022

Greetings! March Forth Indeed! As you read in my short message of Feb. 25, the NTIA grant was awarded!!! This means CCI will be building fiber to everyone who wants it, starting this spring and finishing up by the end of 2022 (they say).

At last! The 21st century is arriving in Brooksville and neighboring towns!

You may have some questions. Here is one place you may find some answers: <https://www.peninsulautility4broadband.org/qa.html>

The four-town working group will be meeting with CCI next Friday. If you have questions that still remain to be answered, please send them to me by next Wednesday, or catch me at Town Meeting and I will make a note to ask CCI if I don't have the answer off the top of my head.

We would still like approval of the contingency fund warrant article at Town Meeting. True, there is some money in the Broadband Account, but it is spoken for by the terms of the grants that we were awarded. (Notably, we will be taking the "digital literacy grant" off the back burner. This means we will be gearing up to help anyone who needs assistance with figuring out how to use this amazing communications technology to improve their lives – now that there is the promise of a technology that will be more amazing than frustrating!) The contingency fund we are requesting is from surplus, and hopefully won't be needed, but as the old saying goes, "many a slip 'twixt cup and lip".

See you at Town Meeting! Cheers!

**Broadband News #31**  
**February 22, 2022**

OK it's been a month since News #30, and not much has changed. We are still waiting (increasingly impatiently) for the Federal and State governments to make up their minds on how much Brooksville and our partner towns will receive in funding subsidy. Why do we need this subsidy? Where do I start? Because, simply put, the private sector is unwilling to use its own resources to provide adequate internet service at an affordable consumer price throughout the state, and it is very unfair to expect our rural towns to cough up all the necessary dough with our property taxes. I could say a lot more on this subject, but don't get me started.... Anyway, at some point hopefully soon we will find out if the NTIA grant is going to come through for ConnectME. If it doesn't, we are working on funding alternatives, including the Maine Connectivity Authority (which is just beginning to develop its funding mechanisms) and Hancock County, which has hired Mission Broadband to help figure out what its role should be. Thanks to all your comments and shared speed test data, we have a package of information to provide to Mission for background. You may recognize the name, as that is the consulting outfit that helped with our 4-town RFP.

In a new development, the original low income broadband consumer rate, the EBB - Emergency Broadband Benefit - has been made permanent, starting in March... but the program has a new name - ACP - Affordable Connectivity Program - and the amount of the monthly benefit has been reduced quite a bit. For details, see <https://acpbenefit.org>. When you scroll through the long list of providers enrolled in the program in zip code 04617 (it's not an alphabetical list), you will find CCI on the second page. There are probably a number of Brooksville residents who are eligible but haven't taken advantage of this program. While it was EBB (with its \$50 per month subsidy), we know of situations where the customer was paying less than \$1 per month for reliable 15 Mbps service.

One other thing that has changed from News #30 is the status of the Comprehensive Plan. When the draft plan was sent to the State, to our collective surprise it didn't trigger a process that would be finished in time for the plan to be approved at town meeting. So, there will probably have to be a special town meeting sometime late summer/fall to approve the Comp Plan. BUT we still need approval of our broadband request in this year's March warrant. This request sets up \$10,000 for developing a plan to fund our broadband infrastructure, IF WE NEED IT, e.g. if the NTIA grant is not awarded. So please go to Town Meeting March 8 if you can, and vote to approve that warrant article for broadband. Rest assured if we don't absolutely need the funds, they won't be spent, but they need to be authorized now, or the whole process could be slowed down to such an extent that we might miss out when the State and Feds get their act together and funding becomes available this summer. As we explained in News #30, this is just to provide resources for developing a funding plan, not to implement it, which necessarily would be the subject of a separate town vote (possibly at the same meeting as the Comp Plan). Please call or email me if you would like more info on this frustrating situation. My phone number is 207 326 8022.

And keep sending your speed test information, and anecdotes about your internet situation!

Spring is on the way... I think!

**Broadband News #30**  
**January 16, 2022**

Hello there! We are heading into a storm here tomorrow, so they say. A good fiberoptic network would be able to withstand it, one hopes! Part of “future proofing” is planning for bigger storms.

As promised, here is the broadband article to be posted in the Town Report. (note: this will appear in the Town Report and isn't linked here – it was sent via email to newsletter subscribers)

I also want to call your attention to two articles that will appear on the Town Warrant. One is to set aside \$10K in the Broadband Account in case we need it for legal and financing assistance. Happy to answer questions on this: it's mentioned in the above-linked report. The budget committee has gone over it and voted “OK”. We may not need \$10K, but it's a good idea to have it available quickly in case we do. For example, the contract with CCI (if we need it) will be complicated and detailed, and we will probably need a lawyer with relevant experience to pick it apart carefully to be sure the Town's interests are protected.

The other item on the warrant will be an article seeking approval of the Town Comprehensive Plan. This is an important document that took a team of dedicated volunteers years to make, and it's a key to obtaining future grants for necessary infrastructure (such as measures to prepare for climate change). It's also an interesting in-depth look at our Town. You can find the whole thing (including summary and FAQ's)

here: <https://www.brooksvillemaine.org/index.php?sectionID=266&pageID=2331>

If you are not a full-time voting resident of Brooksville, I'm sorry that you can't vote on these warrant articles: I can only urge you to get in touch with your friends and neighbors who ARE voters here. In your conversation, you could share why these two articles are important to you.

Finally, if you haven't had a chance to look at the 4-town Broadband Report, a slightly improved version is on the Town website here: [https://www.brooksvillemaine.org/bville/snp\\_files/D02996-Broadband%20Committees%20Status%20Report%201-10-2022.pdf](https://www.brooksvillemaine.org/bville/snp_files/D02996-Broadband%20Committees%20Status%20Report%201-10-2022.pdf) Thank you to everyone who pointed out the errors!

There was also an article about it in the Weekly Packet, but you wouldn't have seen it in the print version. It's here: <https://penobscotbaypress.com/news/2022/jan/14/blue-hill-broadbandcommittee-releases-report-reco/#.YeG8ni-B0Qw>. Note that Scott Miller is extensively quoted, and that's entirely fair as he was the primary author. I can only claim credit for being a sounding board and kibitzer.

And also thanks to those who have sent questions for the FAQ sheet I'm working on. They have been great questions! I'm checking my answers to be sure they are right before I publish the FAQ. There's still time to ask questions, so I hope to hear from you!

With best wishes ~

Abbie

**Brooksville Broadband News #29**

**January 7, 2022**

Greetings on this snowy evening! I hope you are all well, toasty warm, and still connected to the internet despite the weather!

The 4-town working group has finished our report on the results of the RFP we issued in July - and you can find the report here: [https://www.brooksvillemaine.org/bville/snp\\_files/D02996-2022-01-07%20Broadband%20Committees%20Status%20Report.pdf](https://www.brooksvillemaine.org/bville/snp_files/D02996-2022-01-07%20Broadband%20Committees%20Status%20Report.pdf)

The first four pages are a summary, and the rest of the report has details. If your time is limited, please try to read the first four pages.

I am looking for some help in making up a set of “frequently asked questions” that will explain what our recommendations are, and why we are making them.

This would be similar to the 3-fold flyer that was made for the Comprehensive Plan Committee, which proved to be very useful.

What I would like is a list of questions you, or you think others, might have! Just send me an email. You can do that before reading the report (linked above). It will be interesting to see if the report answers them. If it doesn't, we will do our best to get the answers!

The next thing you will be getting (after the Brooksville Broadband Committee approves) is the text we are submitting for the Annual Town Report.

Things are moving, although sometimes it seems at a snail's pace!

Be well, hope to hear from you!

Abbie

## Brooksville Broadband News # 28

Hi Friends

It's been a while since we corresponded, but we (Doug and I) have been quite busy and I want to bring you up to date.

A subcommittee (Doug, me, Mike Prior, Jessica Boger, Matt Prigge and Mike Vandewoude) signed a confidentiality agreement so that we could dig into the confidential portions of the proposals received in response to the RFP issued in July. The evaluation was done (thank you subcommittee!) and shared with our partner towns (Blue Hill, Deer Isle and Penobscot), which also did their own evaluations, and we have arrived at a group consensus on the most practical and economical way forward. As you may recall, we also engaged the services of Mission Broadband to help draft the RFP and evaluate the responses. (Mission is a consulting firm based in Bangor that works only on behalf of the public sector and does not have a tie to any particular vendor.)

In a nutshell, here is a comparison chart. The ownership entry for CCI should read "partial" as what they proposed is a hybrid public/private ownership.

	<b>4 Town RFP Cost &amp; Capability Comparison</b>					
	CCI	GWI	SERTEX	AXIOM	MATRIX	SPECTRUM
Ownership	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
PON	XGS PON	XGS PON	XGS PON	UNK	GPON	EPON
FTTP	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
Symmetrical	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
Ubiquitous (Universal)	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
No Data Caps/Throttle guarantee	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
Subscriber Cost (low to high)	1	2	Inc.	Inc.	5	6
Cost (low - high) Short & Long Term	1	2	3/4	3/4	5	6
4-Towns served to the same standard	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N

We (me, Doug and our counterparts in the other towns) are drafting a REPORT that we plan to make public in early January, outlining the entire process we went through and the conclusions we reached. I have briefed our Brooksville selectmen on everything, in executive session (following the provisions of Title 1 M.R.S. 405(6)(C)—"economic development"). We have not made any commitment to any vendor, nor are we as a committee empowered to make any binding commitments anyway. (That's for the Selectmen and Town Meeting. We just develop recommendations.)

We are obviously discussing with CCI how their possible NTIA grant would affect our path forward. The NTIA grant request, you may recall, was put forth by ConnectME on behalf of CCI and 8 towns on the Blue Hill peninsula as well as some other parts of the state. The awards were initially going to be announced in mid November and that date has now been pushed forward into January at the earliest. If the award is made, the Towns will incur no capital cost for the fiber buildout, and our search for a private sector partner is de facto over and out of our hands, although there could possibly be some contract negotiations with CCI, which has now established a subsidiary called "Fidium" to do their broadband work. (You can read about "Fidium" at their promotional website <https://www.fidiumfiber.com/> ). We have had information-sharing discussions with the town of Rangeley which finds itself (and its three other satellite towns) in the same position as a potential recipient of services through the same NTIA grant request.

We have also been closely following the situation with respect to financing. Everyone has heard that there are huge promises of federal dollars flowing to the states. The wheels seem to be turning very, very slowly, but Maine is in a good position to get its act together and be ready to receive and disburse funds when they finally become available. Our goal is to be ready as a four town group to receive our share. We are working on the draft of an interlocal agreement in case that becomes needed (i.e. if the NTIA grant is not awarded). There may be a need for some Town money for legal work, and I plan to discuss the possibility of a set-aside or contingency fund with the budget committee as soon as I can meet with them, early in January. We don't have a specific dollar requirement, but we should put something in the warrant for the March town meeting, so that we will have it available if we need it. There may also be expenses involved with a special town meeting later in 2022, once the financing situation clarifies at the state and federal level. Again this applies if the NTIA grant is not awarded. If we don't need the funds, as the Selectmen pointed out, we can always just "x out" the request at Town Meeting.

Happy to have a phone conversation with any of you who have questions or want details that this brief message does not contain! The aforementioned REPORT may answer a bunch of them, hopefully.

Best wishes for a peaceful, healthy and joyous New Year!

Abbie

207 326 8022

Hello again! Here's an update.

Some of you may have read an article in yesterday's Weekly Packet, describing Sedgwick's and Brooklin's desire to enter into an interlocal agreement to establish a municipal utility for the purpose of building better broadband "with no tax impact on residents or businesses". The plan, as we understand it, is to raise necessary capital by 1) having those towns or the new utility borrow money to fund required local contributions, or 2) receiving an adequate amount of grant money to do the job without investment of municipal dollars. If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is.

Your broadband committee has carefully evaluated this type of utility since 2018. The bottom line is, borrowing funds without committing the general credit of the towns (such as via "revenue bonds") requires the entity issuing them to have a track record of successful operations, so projecting the funds for repayment is straightforward (or else, who would buy the bonds? And what is the interest rate needed to attract investors?) In other towns where a stand-alone municipal broadband utility has been implemented, the bond issuing entity either is an established development authority (e.g. Calais), or is building an expansion of a successful network that was originally started with private investment (e.g. ValleyNet in Vermont). Alternatively, it is possible the bonds could find a market if the full faith and credit of the Towns is backing the bonds ("general obligations"). In that case, if the "take rate" projections don't work out as anticipated and revenues do not cover costs, there would indeed be tax ramifications to the towns, as the bonds would be indistinguishable from other municipal obligations. Also to be considered is the fact that our towns, without dense population, are expensive to serve: as the cost to the consumer goes up, the take rate goes down.

As far as grant money is concerned, so far we have not seen any granting agency offering to pay 100% of the capital cost: there is always a matching requirement that has to be raised locally. If that match is from an equity investor, their return on investment requirements have to be factored into the cost of capital. The municipal bond rate is cheaper.

All towns in the Blue Hill area are aware that the state broadband agency (ConnectME) has recently submitted an application for funds from the Department of Commerce (NTIA program), which the state would then apply to Consolidated Communications' proposal to build out fiber to the premises throughout 8 towns. A decision on this application is due this fall. Before the state and CCI made this application for federal funds, four towns worked together to issue an RFP for building universal broadband throughout Brooksville, Blue Hill, Penobscot and Deer Isle. We are right now in the process of evaluating responses from six highly qualified firms. Everyone is aware that the NTIA funding may come through, in which case the towns' role would be to ensure that CCI's performance is adequately guaranteed in its contract with ConnectME. If the funding does not come through, we have a ready pool of companies that we will have "vetted" as potential partners in a quest for financing. If it proves advantageous for Brooksville to enter into any sort of interlocal agreement at that time, with any town or group of towns, we can do so.

Interestingly enough, 91% of 275 respondents (thus far) to the broadband survey we recently sent out to all Brooksville building owners, have said that they support spending local tax dollars on better broadband, if it becomes necessary. This is a realistic assessment, and we are proud of the wisdom shown by our citizens. The unfortunate thing for all of us in rural areas is that the importance of broadband as an essential public service (like electricity and phone) was not recognized at least a decade ago. But it wasn't, and here we are. Your broadband committee is committed to staying on top of the situation.

In other news, the Town Comprehensive Plan committee has recently posted its findings on our sister webpage of the town website. Go to <https://www.brookvillemaine.org/>, choose "Town Government" from the drop down menu, click on Ordinances & Policies, choose the Summary, and scroll to page 19, summary of Chapter L, "Broadband". If you have the time, please check out also the Frequently Asked Questions. The plan will be needing a town vote of support, next March.

So long for now. Always happy to receive your questions and comments!

Abbie

## #26...September 3, 2021

Hello and welcome to all the 156 NEW subscribers (so far) who indicated on their survey form that they would like to be kept informed of broadband developments! The mailing list now stands at 461.

For the new subscribers: this is an opt-out list. You are free to remove your address at any time, no hard feelings. Just send me an email with the email address you want removed, with the subject "remove".

A few of you sent what looks like a different email address than what we already had, so you might get two of these newsletters. If you want to use a preferred address, just let me know which one to keep and which one to remove.

Anyone can also always read these communications on the Town webpage here:

<https://www.brooksvillemaine.org/brooksville-broadband> which has additional information and briefings.

The survey responses have been welcome and interesting indeed, with strong support for better broadband. I plan to post some of the specific survey findings over the next few months. Here's the first installment:

Internet Service Provider	Equipped	Satisfied	Satisfied %	Avg. Down	Avg. Up
CCI	165	39	24%	12.20	4.17
AT&T	4	1	25%	25.82	6.89
Premium Choice	8	1	13%	3.56	0.74
HughesNet	14	0	0%	20.98	1.11
Verizon	3	0	0%	3.24	0.49
ViaSat	3	1	33%	0.70	0.42
US Cellular	3	0	0%	0.00	0.00
Unspecified Cellular	9	1	11%	15.63	0.68
None	10	2	20%	0.00	0.00
Other	0	0	N/A	0.00	0.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>219</b>			<b>8.21</b>	<b>1.45</b>

Note the average speed in Brooksville in no way comes close to the minimum acceptable of 25 down, 3 up, let alone the new state standard of 50/10.

Today, Friday Sept. 3, is the date that proposals are due from the companies that have chosen to respond to the four-town RFP that was issued July 9. If you are interested in reading the RFP, you can find it here:

<https://www.peninsulautility4broadband.org/rfp.html>. In a nutshell, it asks companies for a proposal to provide fiber-to-the-premises universally throughout the four involved towns, ASAP. The four cooperating towns are Brooksville, Blue Hill, Penobscot and Deer Isle. Each town has a subcommittee dedicated to reviewing the proposals, and their work is about to start. All subcommittee members have signed confidentiality agreements, so that company proprietary information is protected, in case the proposals contain any such information. The responding companies are all very good ones and we expect a difficult, but rational, decision.

Finally, a long awaited development: Effective September 1, Consolidated Communications is participating in the "EBB" rate program, which gives a significant price break for qualified customers. To find out more, see: [www.consolidated.com/ebb](http://www.consolidated.com/ebb). Be prepared though: the signup process is a two-step process and not particularly easy. First, the intended recipient for the discount has to submit information to a specific national organization to prove they qualify. We are cautioned to beware of a scam that is scarfing up personal data in this process, so be sure ONLY to use "the official Emergency Broadband Benefit website <https://www.usac.org/about/emergency-broadband-benefit-program/>, to enroll in the program." Once the applicant qualifies, they get a special qualification code, which they submit to whichever internet service provider they have chosen. This works for both existing and new customers. However, you may get a notice that CCI is not accepting new customers in your area. If you have an existing internet account, it should work, if you qualify.

That's enough for today! More info as we go forward.

Abbie

#25... July 24, 2021

Hello! Things are progressing on the broadband front!

On Monday, we will mail out a survey to all owners of buildings in Brooksville. This is similar to the survey we did in 2018 but seeks an update. PLEASE answer the current survey, because it's the best way we have of gathering your current opinions. Please try to do the speed test, but if you can't do the speed test, please answer the survey anyway. There is a stamped envelope for your convenience. (Those of you who already responded online, thank you! If you get a survey in the mail it's our mistake!)

Last Monday we had a short Q&A session with potential responders to the RFP. We reinforced our intent to go forward with review of proposals leading to a selected vendor, hopefully by mid September. We and the vendor will form a partnership to seek the best, most affordable funding options. Ideally, with all the support being offered at the federal and state levels, we can obtain all necessary capital in the form of grants and vendor investments, rather than town debt. (That may be wishful thinking, but we are hopeful.) Several very well qualified companies have said they intend to respond, which is good news.

Blue Hill is starting on a public information campaign. People from Brooksville are welcome to attend the following:

**Wednesday, August 4, 2021: 7-8pm at the Blue Hill Public Library**

Scott Miller (selectman of Blue Hill) and Butler Smythe (RFP manager) will be there to describe our efforts and answer questions. I plan to go.

We may host a similar session in Brooksville before Labor Day. Let us know if you think it would be beneficial.

In another development, CCI has submitted a proposal to the state agency, ConnectME, which accepted the proposal for inclusion in the State's application for funds from the US Dept of Commerce. There is no assurance that the feds will fund it, so we are not letting that slow down our RFP effort. The proposal covers all 8 towns on the Blue Hill peninsula. We aren't privy to all the details, but it supposedly would build gigabit fiber throughout all the towns.

Your input is always welcome. PLEASE ANSWER THE SURVEY, encourage your friends and neighbors to do so, and also use the envelope we provided to send us your comments about why better broadband is important to you!

Onward!



Hello! We sent newsletter #23 on June 25. In the past 2 weeks, we have accomplished the following:

1. We have prepared the survey to mail to the entire Town. With Elizabeth and Gayle's help, we have printed mailing labels from the Town's files. The survey will go to all the owners of properties that have buildings on them, except for about 40 of you who have already sent in a survey. Here are some interesting statistics about the mailout:

728 total surveys will be mailed out

232 will go to out-of-state addresses

377 to in-town (Brooksville or Harborside) addresses

119 to Maine addresses that are neither out of state, nor in-town

About 63 of the addressees (from any of the above categories) are going to a trust, or a club or church, or some other entity that is not an individual owner. We still hope they will respond, as some day they may want to have an internet connection.

We also gathered some other facts from the tax commitment book:

There are about 1371 parcels in Brooksville

919 of them have buildings on them

There are about 217 owners who have registered for the Homestead Exemption

The difference between the 919 buildings and the 728 surveys we are mailing out is partly because some of you have already sent in a survey, but mostly because one owner may own several parcels that have buildings on them. We are asking those owners to fill out the survey multiple times, if they feel it is appropriate because more than one of their buildings may have, or want, internet.

2. We also finalized the RFP that we mentioned in newsletter #23. It went out to a list of qualified proposers last night. On Monday we expect a press release to go out to our local papers (Ellsworth American and Penobscot Bay Press). Below is what we sent out. It will be interesting to see what ends up getting printed! You may notice that the press release contains a link to a website where you can read the RFP in its entirety, should you choose to do so.

Always happy to receive your feedback! Happy weekend!

### **Peninsula Broadband Committees Issue RFP**

*Blue Hill, Brooksville, Deer Isle and Penobscot seek improved broadband access*

(July XX, 2021) – Broadband committee representatives and officials from four towns have united for the common purpose of improving broadband (high speed internet) access through the construction of a Fiber to the Premises (FTTP) network.

The RFP announcement is a significant milestone in an effort to make fast, affordable and reliable internet available to every household and business in the affiliated towns.

“While the effort to bring true broadband internet access to the entire Peninsula has been underway for more than three years, the recent pandemic has driven home the need for reliable, accessible internet for our students, medical professionals and their patients, the business community, those who work from home and many others. The poor or non-existent access, coupled with increased state and federal focus on supporting rural broadband efforts makes it clear that the time to act is now,” said Scott Miller, Selectman of Blue Hill.

The Town representatives selected Bangor-based consulting firm Mission Broadband to advise on the RFP and assist with evaluating proposals received. “We are happy to have this very experienced, national firm lending a hand as we embark on this important step”, said Abbie McMillen, co-chair of the Brooksville Broadband Committee. “We have determined that Mission is one of only two consulting firms in the state that works solely on behalf of communities, so there is no conflict of interest with any of the potential proposers.”

Surveys have shown that internet speeds are nearly universally substandard within the four towns, and a great deal of frustration has been expressed by residents about the speed and quality of service. It is anticipated that the responses to the RFP will clarify the range of potential opportunities to greatly improve the situation, as well as the associated costs.

Recently there has been encouragement of public/private broadband partnerships through funding opportunities at both at the state and national level. Once the best qualified firm is selected through the RFP process, the resulting partnership will be applying for any and all available grants to help defray the costs to the Towns.

“It is important to recognize that no agreements that involve any significant Town expenditures will be finalized until there is appropriate Town approval”, said James Fisher, Town Manager of Deer Isle. “We hope that our RFP will lead our towns to adopt the most cost effective, reliable solution for improving this critical and now essential infrastructure.”

According to Joel Katz, Chairman of the Penobscot Broadband Committee, “The future of Maine towns like Penobscot depends on fiber everywhere to draw the families, entrepreneurs, and others to the beautiful coast. Fast, affordable and “future proof” is not too much to ask.” The RFP is available at <https://www.peninsulautility4broadband.org/rfp.html>.

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About Mission Broadband

For more information, visit [www.missionbroadband.com](http://www.missionbroadband.com).

## Brooksville Broadband News 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:

[Maine Broadband \(mainebroadbandcoalition.org\)](http://mainebroadbandcoalition.org)

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/brooksville-broadband>

**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/boards-committees>

**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](mailto: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](http://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

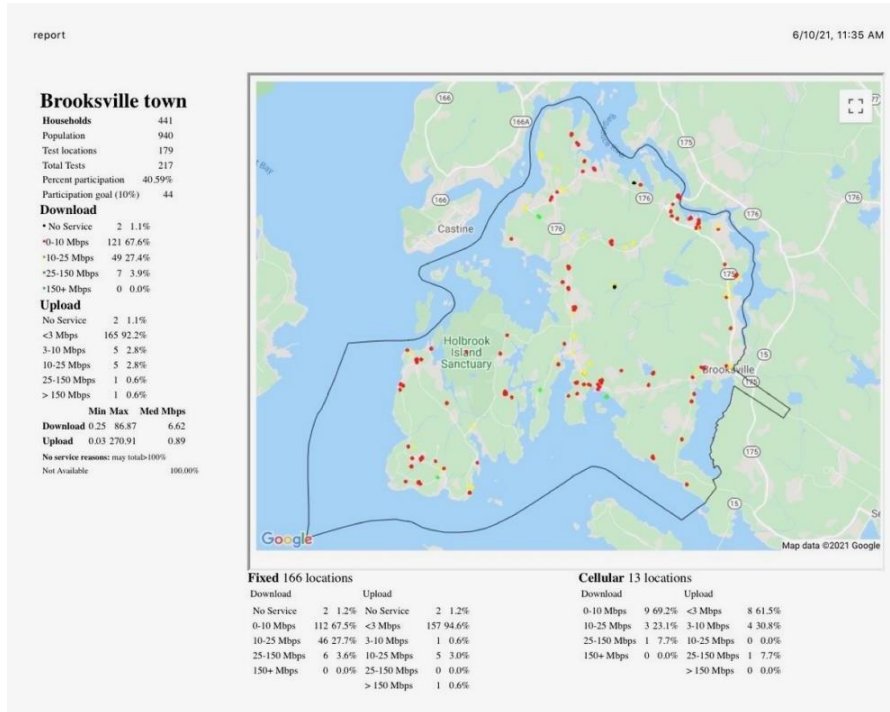
Comments:

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?

### Speed Test Results from Brooksville

The Maine Broadband Coalition has been collecting speed test results for several months, and is continuing to collect them. The idea is that the worst areas (like Brooksville) will get priority attention. Here are the results so far from Brooksville. Note that a total of 217 tests have been registered from 179 locations. That’s good, but we can and should do more tests. I’d like to see at least one from each of our 441 households! Go to <https://www.mainebroadbandcoalition.org/> and touch **run speed test**. Also, those black dots are valuable, where you enter an address with **no available** service on the initial speed test page!



### Brooksville Internet Survey

We have already received 30 surveys in response to the last two newsletters. And, thanks to Bill Gregor and Bruce Stahnke, we now have a fillable PDF form. So if you haven’t already sent in your survey, you may use this form (next page) and email it back to me. (I hope it works when it’s uploaded to the Town website.)

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](http://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?

### AT&T opposes local broadband solutions

But, darn it, whatever happened to that good old fashioned American virtue of self reliance and initiative to solve our local problems? The major telecom companies are doing nothing for Brooksville on their own initiative, so what are we supposed to do? Depopulate the town and move to urban areas? That isn't going to happen! Continue to be excluded from the benefits of fast internet? Not if we can help it! After you read this link, maybe send a note to our congressional representatives. And send me a copy.

[AT&T CEO seems confident industry can kill Biden's municipal broadband plan | Ars Technica](#)

### Finally: Keep your eye on the newspapers

If all goes well, there may be an article in the Packet and/or the Ellsworth American announcing that the RFP is forthcoming, as mentioned in Newsletter # 21. Selectmen from the involved Towns are meeting to discuss broadband, which is a very good thing!

**And, Enjoy the weather**

#21... May 31, 2021

Greetings! Things are hopping on the broadband front. In no particular order of importance:

1. Brooksville has joined Blue Hill and Penobscot in drafting an RFP for a full-service broadband provider (design, build, operate). It should be released this month. If we are successful in attracting an experienced firm or association of firms to respond to the proposal, and IF we can arrange a financing method (to include maximum use of state and federal funding), we are asking the successful proposer to complete the work by the end of 2023. "The work" is to build symmetrical, 1 gig fiber to the premises throughout the towns, at a reasonable price for all who wish to sign up for the service, i.e. "universal" availability. There's a lot more to the RFP as you can imagine, but we have been informed by reliable sources that there are at least 3 experienced companies interested in proposing. Deer Isle is also an involved town, although they did not participate in the RFP drafting. We hope Brooklin and Sedgwick will come along with us in this effort. If you have friends in those towns, please ask them to look into it. The more towns that provide part of the customer base, the better deal we are all likely to get, both from the financing entities and from the providers.

2. In anticipation that some of the funding for our project may come from the state agency, ConnectME, we filled out and sent in their mandatory "precertification form", which describes the composition of the Broadband Committee and answers their mandatory questions. This is available if you wish a copy, and will eventually be posted on our web page.

3. Speaking of "our web page", we just recently discovered that we have one, on the Town website! Here's a link to it:  
<https://www.brooksvillemaine.org/brooksville-broadband>

Right now, the only things that are posted there are a report I did in early May, which serves as a summary of work to date, and the full roster of all Broadband Newsletters that you have received up to #20, arranged in reverse chronological order. (This took some digging in my "sent" email to find them all, and I might have missed some.) Committee members Kathy Bonk and Doug Cowan (my co-chairman) are busy re-designing our webpage so that it can include a lot more information. Especially as we move into implementation (hopefully!) we will need to reach out assertively to be sure everyone in Town is informed and has a chance for input. Because we have so much information that you should be able to access, Kathy and Doug may actually need to create a whole 'nother website, linked to the Town website, as is done by other entities like the Historical Society and the Education Foundation.

4. The same cast of characters (Kathy, Doug, myself) and my husband Mike, also created several drafts of a Broadband piece for the Town Comprehensive Plan. This was gone over with a fine-tooth comb by the Comp Plan committee with excellent improvements, and is about to be posted on the Comp Plan webpage. We will cross-link it with our web page.

5. We've designed a survey to follow up on the 2018 survey. This was sent along with your last newsletter, but we have added a question to it. In case you would like to fill it out now and save the Town some mailing \$, the revised Word document is attached.[was attached to the email] (I would love to send it out as a "fillable" PDF but I don't know how to create one of those.) Formatting doesn't matter to us, so if the format gets messed up in your response, don't worry about it. We have 20 responses in hand so far, and they are all perfectly useable and don't need to be re-done. THANK YOU!

We always look forward to hearing from you.

Abbie, for the

Brooksville Broadband Committee

p.s. we now have 301 subscribers to this newsletter!

#20...May 13, 2021

There is a LOT going on! your Broadband Committee has been very busy!

### **Update the broadband survey:**

We plan to send out another broadband survey in June, as soon as the new town tax maps are done so we have the most up to date mailing list. But you don't need to wait for that! Attached is the new survey form, and we'd love to get a head start on compiling the results. If you would like to participate early, please fill out the attached "word" file and email it back. This is a great chance to help us improve the survey, too.

### **Speed tests:**

ConnectME, the state broadband agency, would like more speed tests to help fill out their map. This is the best way of registering the fact that we need better broadband. They are urging us to take the test as many times as we like, because it will improve their data. Areas such as Brooksville will be in a good position to receive funding for a major broadband improvement, and the speed test is a great way to demonstrate our need for it.

To take the test: <https://www.mainebroadbandcoalition.org/>, press "take the test".

To view the results: <https://maps.sewall.com/connectme/public/>

### **Getting help with your internet bill:**

There's a federal program called the Emergency Broadband Benefit (EBB). More information is here:

<https://getemergencybroadband.org> A lot of cell phone companies that serve Brooksville are participating: the website has a long list of "companies near me" for zip code 04617. Unfortunately at this time Consolidated Communications, which is the commonly used ISP in Brooksville, is not (yet) part of the program. If you have a way to contact CCI, please urge them to get on board with it! We know they are thinking about it, and we'll let you know as soon as they offer it. It's a hugely popular program elsewhere.

### **Updates to Town website:**

We just discovered last week that the Broadband Committee has a webpage on the Town website! Right now it's "under construction" but there should be some interesting information posted there within the month. We hope that it will give you a more in-depth look at what we are doing than these brief emails allow. We'll let you know when it's ready for "prime time".

### **Broadband in the Town Comprehensive Plan:**

The Comp Plan committee asked us to provide a section on broadband: four of us worked on several versions of it and now it's in the hands of the Comp Plan committee to mull over and edit.

### **Getting ready for the forthcoming infusion of federal cash:**

Widespread news reports say that there will be a lot of federal funding for better broadband to "unserved" areas like Brooksville. We are working to put the town into the best position to benefit from those funds. This involves close collaboration with ConnectME and our neighboring towns. Right now there are plans afoot to hire a consultant to do a joint broadband plan for Blue Hill, Brooklin, Brooksville, Deer Isle, Penobscot and Sedgwick. We are also engaged in conversation with Consolidated Communications which has a proposition to offer, whereby the towns pony up some funding for high speed "fiber to the premises". There are a lot of questions to be asked about this proposition, and we are fortunate that our Broadband Committee has the expertise to ask them! If you want to know more about your Broadband Committee members, send me an email.

As Bugs Bunny said, "That's All, Folks"! Happy Spring!

#19...Apr 27, 2021

Greetings friends! The money is (maybe) going to start flowing

Another timely news article, kindly sent in PDF form by Kathy Bonk, a member of your broadband committee. *[news article link: "Flush with Cash, Mills Touts Plan to Expand Broadband" by Peter McGuire, Portland Press Herald, 4-27-21]*

Kathy suggests, and I concur, that it would be a good idea for as many as possible to contact our State representatives to encourage support of this bill. I sent email to the two listed sponsors at these addresses:

[Richard.Bennett@legislature.maine.gov](mailto:Richard.Bennett@legislature.maine.gov)

[Seth.Berry@legislature.maine.gov](mailto:Seth.Berry@legislature.maine.gov)

and also to Sarah Pebworth (our representative) [sapebworth@gmail.com](mailto:sapebworth@gmail.com)

and Louis Luchini (our senator) at [louis.luchini@legislature.maine.gov](mailto:louis.luchini@legislature.maine.gov)

(if you have a better address for him please let me know.) Work continues. Most recently we are working with a group of neighboring towns to consider hiring a consultant to steer us through the new funding opportunities, and what these opportunities may mean for accelerating broadband development sooner than the 6 to 10 year buildout contemplated by CCI. We've also alerted the Comprehensive plan committee that (obviously) better broadband will make Brooksville an even more attractive place for people to live, which has implications for planning. Times are changing. Stay tuned! Your input is always welcome and valued



**#18...Apr 18, 2021**

Blindsided! Here we are as a region of 8 towns, with broadband committees working cooperatively to solve our joint bad internet problem, and all of a sudden Stonington comes up with a separate deal they have negotiated with CCI (the phone and DSL company). We first learned about it in the paper. If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is - there are some important details to be worked out. Also note, Stonington's average density of premises is much greater than Brooksville's, which makes the construction cost much lower than ours would be. [Stonington to get 'NASA-level' internet service | Island Ad-Vantages | Penobscot Bay Press \(islandadvantages.com\)](#)

So, your Broadband Committee struggles on. Lots of activity right now on creating a financial model for an independent, non profit, public utility corporation, owned by member towns. (This is being done elsewhere in the state.) We are also working actively on strategies to lower the cost for low income subscribers. Legal documents have been drafted and are on hold, pending a decision on whether to recommend an Interlocal Agreement to our Selectboards. Happy to send the drafts if you are curious.

Your questions and opinions are always valuable and welcomed.

## #17...March 2021

If you are curious why we can't just wait until Consolidated and/or Starlink provide high-speed internet for us, without effort on our part, send me an email or call me and we can discuss.

If you are interested in helping with the data gathering in your neighborhood, please get in touch.

Onward

#16...Feb 8, 2021

Midwinter greetings.

There is an article in the Bangor Daily News that quotes Brooksville's own Dr. Cassidy and Clara Parkes. You can read it here, and also answer the accompanying poll.

[Pandemic is stressing Maine's internet speeds \(bangordailynews.com\)](https://bangordailynews.com)

It's worth noting that this news article would not have appeared, had we not been able to forward your letters to the reporter, and we would not have known to do so except for the alertness of Brooksville's Barbara Blake-Chapman.

What can you do next? It's still worth doing two things: (1) your speed test, if you haven't already, with the ConnectME website link, and (2) if you haven't done so, send me a letter or an email (like Clara and Dan and others have done), that I can forward to interested and useful persons like legislators, reporters etc. expressing your internet experiences and recommended remedies for the situation. We are still hoping that if we keep beating the drum, eventually someone will hear us.

We still do not have an answer from Consolidated (CCI) about their buildout plan and schedule to bring "gigabit fiber" speeds to the portions of Brooksville that were identified by the FCC as needing improvement. Note, CCI has 6 years to finish the job, they are off the hook for 5% of the locations in the territory they promised to serve, and that territory is far larger than Brooksville. Rumor has it that CCI is focused on New Hampshire, and Maine will lag. There are neighborhoods here that may be entirely left out of their service, in which case we will have to devise an alternative. But until we have their plan in hand, we won't know. We are in limbo, or if you prefer, a "catch 22" situation.

We also do not have an update on the application that GWI has made for serving the parts of Brooksville that aren't in the CCI-awarded territory. (Note: We feel good about the fact that GWI was awarded "B Corporation" status, more info here: [B Corp Certification demonstrates a company's entire social and environmental impact. \(bcorporation.net\)](https://bcorporation.net))

As soon as anything definitive comes along about either of these projects, I will let you know.

Meanwhile, has anyone receiving this message signed up for Starlink service? Have you received it yet? How is it working for you?

**#15...Nov 28, 2020**

Hello all Attached is a very fine letter written by a medical professional, Michele Polacsek, who recently moved to Brooksville. I feel that it captures the essence of the problem. Please do read it. If you also wish to send a letter, to Peggy Schaffer, a legislator, or a letter to the editor, please copy me. I'm collecting your comments because at some point we may want to present testimony somewhere, in order to help Brooksville get decent internet service. [Letter attached available on request]

I've been discussing with Andrew Butcher of the Maine Broadband Coalition and the Greater Portland Council of Governments (and also a summer Brooksville resident since childhood) the "look but don't touch" problem that Michelle eloquently references in her letter. We've been brainstorming the thought that there should be some legislation that requires companies to offer service to those along the fiber route that they are installing for one private party. Of course equitable cost sharing arrangements should be worked out. If you have thoughts on this subject, please let me know.

No word on the GWI grant yet. I will mention that there seems to be some enthusiasm locally for the star-link satellite system, which is in beta testing for some U.S. locations north of 45 degrees north latitude. No idea when, or if, the beta test will move in our direction. (Brooksville is 44.34 degrees north lat.) The cost per customer (even in the beta test phase) is about \$500 for equipment and \$100 per month. The GWI proposal would be significantly less expensive to the customer. And, in my opinion, fiber technology has the advantage of a track record, being relatively weatherproof, and perhaps less vulnerable to systemwide failure.

If you haven't already, please do that speed test referenced in the last broadband news. Here's the link again:

<https://www.mainebroadbandcoalition.org/speed-test-info>

Carry on!

1. At the moment, there is no new news about the fate of the GWI loan application to build out fiber internet in Brooksville. It is beyond frustrating for all of us.

2. ConnectMe is encouraging everyone in the state to take more speed tests and submit them through the ConnectMe platform. If you have any difficulties completing this “assignment” please ask, I might be able to help you figure it out (you can phone me at 207 326 8022). Please do this to add Brooksville tests to the statewide picture. <https://www.mainebroadbandcoalition.org/speed-test-info>. You can scroll to enlarge the map after you do the test to see the dot that represents your location.

3. HOWEVER, Please do not take this test to add your results to the overall Town results IF you are one of those households who has arranged a private deal with CCI to provide fiber to your personal residence! Most of us cannot afford to do that, and I worry that your super speeds are going to mislead authorities into thinking that we are all set. I think my worry is justified given that the FCC has been in the habit of believing that, if one household in a census block was “served”, all households were (or could be).

If you don’t know what I am talking about, here is the problem. Some Brooksville residents, either fortuitously located really near a CCI terminal, and/or possessed of wealth to spare, have made private arrangements with CCI to serve their private homes with fiber internet. To see what this would have cost my husband and I personally, we talked to CCI. Here is the essence of their quote:

36 month term

\$732.88 per month

\$25,000 “activation fee”

No sharing the service with neighbors. No bundled phone service.

Total cost over three years works out to \$51,383.63 - and no mention of what the future monthly rate would be after three years.

We have heard rumors of hookup fees as high as \$40,000 - \$75,000 (no info on monthly charges). Despite fees of these magnitudes being astronomically out of reach for most Brooksville residents, some people are apparently paying these amounts. (The lowest we have heard works out to \$3000 per year for a resident near a terminal.) And, some residents in separate households on one particular road are being charged the same outrageous price, being told that they each must have individual fiber cables run down the same road, rather than sharing a cable. Some have inquired whether their cable could serve others to save costs, and were told absolutely not. Corporate decision. Because internet is unregulated, CCI can get away with it, and they are taking full advantage of that fact.

I don’t need to tell you that this goes against my principles, or what I believe to be the sentiments of most Mainers who feel that we are all in this together. Given that I feel so strongly about this, I am recusing myself from any future arrangements that anyone in this Town wants to make with CCI. If for example, the GWI loan is not approved and some folks want the Town to consider putting Town money in CCI’s pocket as an act of desperation, like they did in Brooklin, please do not ask me to lift a finger to help. I will be spending effort ONLY in trying to get ALL Brooksville residents a decent level of affordable internet.

Keep submitting your speed tests and advocating for internet as an essential public service!

Abbie

p.s. my latest speed test? 0.48 mBps down, 0.15 mBps up. Red dot on the map.

#13...Apr 28, 2020

Hello all. Hope you are all well, and enjoying your internet connection. (Sincere with the well wishes, but just kidding about the internet.)

Everyone is looking to hear about your internet experiences during this epidemic. Island Institute is collecting your stories. Has your internet been of significant assistance in, for example, keeping in touch with loved ones, ordering groceries and other essentials, keeping busy with work and entertainment? On the other hand, has your internet been a source of pretty much constant frustration, with slower than the usual slow speeds making downloading and uploading a challenge? What about those days when there was no electricity and no internet and you had spotty cell phone service? Did you (like I) feel that you might as well be living in the 1800s? If you write something up for Island Institute, PLEASE send me a copy, because I am also collecting stories for the Brooksville Historical Society. Your story does not have to be limited to internet issues, just anything documenting your experiences with the pandemic. Here's the Island Institute address: [broadbandstories@islandinstitute.org](mailto:broadbandstories@islandinstitute.org).

Speaking of the pandemic, I have been making reusable face masks and have some extras. Email me with your needs.

You may see some news about a forthcoming gigantic \$16B FCC "reverse auction" of federal funds to build broadband in underserved areas (less than 25/3). (A "reverse auction" is simply a government procurement bid process, where the lowest-cost bid usually gets the job, or in this case, the funds to serve a particular service area.) Here's a picture of the FCC current map of eligible parts of Brooksville. We hear that this map may be refined at some point before the auction, expected to take place this year but with significant uncertainty in when the actual buildout might occur. For more info see [Are You Covered by the RDOF Grant? | POTs and PANs \(potsandpansbyccg.com\)](#) If GWI is awarded the Re-Connect grant to build fiber to the premises, I suspect the areas GWI proposes to serve will be excluded from FCC's future refined map. I'm in discussions with GWI to see if there are still gaps that would not be covered by either the Re-Connect grant or this new "reverse auction".



Finally, one of our own, Bea Gates, has been interviewed by CNN to tell her story of trying to make a living here, in the era of terrible internet. The contact came about because I forwarded her story to Peggy Schaffer at the state agency ConnectME, and the CNN reporter contacted Peggy. Your stories matter! You never know their eventual impact. In chaos theory, it's called the "butterfly effect" [Butterfly effect - Wikipedia](#)

Be well, send your stories and your face mask requests.

#12...Apr 16, 2020 (284)

**CALL IN TODAY APRIL !6, 1 pm**

Andrew Butcher alerted us to this: There is a call-in radio program regarding broadband this afternoon: You can listen via streaming here: [Maine Calling | Maine Public](#) and please call in with your questions.

**GW GRANT FOR BROOKSVILLE SUBMITTED**

Kerem Durdag, President and Chief Operating Officer, GWI writes: "Just a fyi... we successfully submitted our ReConnect application. May the good karma and grace of the universe be with us on this journey. As you know, the only thing we hear back is a "yes" or "no"; given the current situation at hand I am not sure when the notification date range will be but when we find out anything, you will find it out with us! Be well and take good care. Kerem"

#11...Mar 26, 2020

We received this message. If you have a minute, please fill out the “survey monkey” survey (linked below). It could be useful and eventually important in our efforts to bring better broadband to Brooksville. Thanks, hope you are well, safely at home, and finding plenty to do!

*Hello all:*

*Mission Broadband has offered a quick survey to collect data on some of the impacts of this current COVID-19 is having on all aspects of our broadband network. They put together a survey to try to capture the end users perspective that might help guide efforts to improve broadband across the state. The survey focuses on a few key items during this crisis, the influx of at-home usages from families staying at home. It's designed to highlight the gaps in coverage, inadequate coverage and social-economic factors. Please take a moment to fill out the survey, and then please share it widely in your virtual networks. Thanks Peggy Schaffer, Director, ConnectMaine Authority [https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/ME\\_SD\\_BB\\_Impact](https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/ME_SD_BB_Impact)*



**1. Frank Szylvian's phone numbers:**

If you suddenly are having increased problems with your DSL service, this is the guy to call. He tries to be helpful so we should try to be nice.

Frank Szylvian (some sort of field manager for Consolidated)

mobile 207 907 0276

work 207 667 9936

**2. A tip from Butler Smythe of Blue Hill:**

With COVID-19, increased demand on the Internet – from home – has raised more issues for many Americans, especially those with poor Internet Capacity (i.e. Speed). This is especially evident for those on DSL which uses traditional phone lines and ranks right up there with Dialup! You CAN help yourself and others by doing one simple thing – and yes this has been tested and has worked for me for the last 3+ years.

**#1 TURN OFF your automatic Application Updates** on your smart phones (All of them), tablets and anything else that uses bandwidth in the home or at work. Simple – it works, and it works for other services as well. I have looked at too much of the advice given for improving Internet capacity recently and not one “expert” had referenced this fact so I am here. This has been on the PUB site since it was set up. **..Please pass it on!**

<http://www.peninsulautility4broadband.org/blue-hill.htm> !

Hi to the 283 recipients of this newsletter.

You may already know that the USDA grant program has pushed forward their proposal deadline from mid March to the end of March. GWI tells us that this essentially has a “neutral” impact on the fund request they are submitting on our behalf. It just makes it easier to make the deadline.

Many thanks to all 40-plus businesses who submitted pre-subscription forms! We were able to supply everything GWI needs in that category. Other evaluation criteria are out of our hands - USDA is looking at “rurality” (extra points for a low population density), number of farms (it is, after all, USDA) and several other criteria that don’t apply to us. We really needed those business forms to score points! So thank you again.

Ben Freedman happened to be in Washington DC last week and met with the Congressional delegation. He gave them an earful about our broadband situation. Way to go, Ben!

There are bills in the Maine legislature to provide funding for broadband. Yesterday I submitted testimony as a member of the Brooksville Broadband Committee, a copy of which is attached.(1) One of our long time summer residents, Andrew Butcher of the Maine Broadband Coalition and the Portland Council of Governments, also submitted testimony. He fully understands our situation - his camp uses Hughes Net.

In response to a request from Jonathan Hall, chairman of the Brooksville Comp Planning committee, I wrote a section about broadband, which will be edited into the draft comp plan. A copy of that is also attached.(2)

This morning, the Portland Press Herald had this comment in an op-ed column about the coronavirus and the effect that “social distancing” will have on old people: *“We’ve got a lot of older frail people in parts of the state that aren’t connected online via high-speed internet,” Parham noted, adding that local daily and weekly newspapers may be their only contact with what’s happening beyond their dooryard.*” As you will read in my testimony to the legislature, Brooksville is the oldest town in the second oldest county in the oldest state in the country. And while we may not be all that “frail”, we are certainly not adequately connected! (Yet) Carry on, stay safe

(the referenced attachments are contained elsewhere on this website:

(1) “Dear Legislators” March 12, 2020 is (where?)

(2) Broadband Report to the Comp Plan committee, March 11 2020 is (where?)

## #8...Feb 18, 2020

Welcome to about 35 new people to this newsletter list! There are now 278 Brooksville residents interested enough in better internet to want to receive this letter! If you have friends or neighbors who would like to be included, just ask them to send me an email.

**1. SPEED TESTS** are vital to the ongoing effort to bring high speed, reliable internet to Brooksville. We need actual, in-field data to prove that we need better internet! This is where you come in!

Thanks to those of you who have sent in recent speed tests. We'd like to compile as many as possible during the month of February. If you haven't had a chance to do a speed test yet, PLEASE do so and **Please send me your results.**

Here is the official link to the speed test used statewide by

ConnectME: <https://speed.measurementlab.net/#/>

It's really easy to do. Write down the results with date and time (or do a screen shot), and email them to me with the address in Brooksville where you did the test. (If you are not residing **in Brooksville** at the present time, obviously you can't do the test. But we will be very interested in your results when you return.)

**2. GWI is writing a new grant application** to cover Brooksville's under-served areas. The application is due in mid March, which is why we need the speed tests now! We are interested in all parts of town, even those where you may have DSL (i.e. internet from Consolidated Communications/previously Fairpoint.) The majority of people in Brooksville are getting internet from Consolidated, often at speeds considerably lower than the "promised" 10/1 Mbps (download/upload). That was true in November of 2018 and remains true, at least so far as preliminary data collected this month shows.

If you have a service provider other than Consolidated, or if your service provider has changed since November of 2018, or if you have added a "bonded pair" to your service in order to speed things up, please let us know.

**3. Much faster than your current speed.** The service that will be provided under the grant application (if approved) will be truly high speed, fiber to the premises, for all who want it *in areas identified as underserved*. Which is why we are in high gear, identifying those areas, through the speed tests!

**4. Stay tuned if you own a business.** If you are running a business in town, including a home based business, we may be requesting a letter from you describing your internet problems. We will know in a few weeks if we need these letters. There will be a specific checklist of items they want to know.

Please email or call me if you have any questions.

Onward!

**#7...Feb 15, 2020**

Hello

I am trying to clean up the email list for persons interested in hearing the latest news about the town's attempt to get high speed internet.

I have your email as someone who might be interested, and would like to invite you to opt in, by sending a reply to this email.

Since our internet situation in town varies a LOT from place to place, please include your intown address where you have, or would like, internet.

Note: someone at your address may already be getting the updates, but I'm happy to send them to you, too, if you would like.

Also note: if you want to be removed from the list, just send me an email saying "remove". No problem.

That should do it for now! Thanks!

Abbie McMillen

for the Brooksville Broadband Committee

Results of tonight's meeting with GWI:

First, there were some important guests. In addition to representatives from some of our neighboring towns, we had our state Rep Sarah Pebworth, and a representative from each of Maine's two Senators. Also the state director of the USDA Rural Development, Tim Hobbs, based in Bangor. Our Island Institute mentor, Stephanie MacLaghan, also came from Old Town. They were all very approachable and knowledgeable and really want to help.

The loan application was rejected not on its merits, but on procedural grounds. I am still trying to ferret out exactly what that means. It has something to do with different branches of USDA that don't work in synchronicity.

The only immediate avenue for us for funding - and it is IMMEDIATE, i.e. application due March 15 - is for the Re-Connect grant program. Note this is a grant and not a loan. The problem with this program is that the areas that are eligible are those where the available speeds are less than 10 download and 1 upload. (The loan program cutoffs were 25 and 3, and almost all of Brooksville qualified.) Using this definition, and looking at the speed tests we collected in November of 2018, we lose about 18% of the respondents. In addition, under the Re-Connect program, what the existing service providers CLAIM they are providing is given significant weight. So some of you folks who are paying CCI for 10/1 but getting much slower speeds might not be included. (Ostensibly the reason for this is because the federal government cannot compete with existing businesses, even if those businesses are doing a lousy job. It's a broken system in the case of an essential service like broadband.)

There may be some improvement in this arbitrary regulation in the future, but not the immediate future, and it certainly won't come into being before March 15. In fact it may be 6 to 9 months before new, better criteria are developed.

One interesting thing though: cell phones being used as hotspots, and the Verizon hookups, and satellite services, don't count because they are not viewed as permanent land based service. So those of you who in desperation have turned to those remedies, you would be included. (Unless you live in an area where supposedly CCI's DSL service is "available", even if you have been told that you can't get it because there are no more slots in the remote terminal. Talk about a Catch 22!)

The March 15 application will need 15 letters from businesses that meet the "under 10/1" definition in the 4 affected towns (Brooksville, Penobscot, Sedgwick, Brooklin combined), and they preferably will come from the farming, fishing and logging sector. We are trying to get the USDA census of those businesses and will ask the affected ones to write letters. We are working with GWI to find out what information those letters should contain.

It is important that everyone do more speed tests, whether or not you live in an area that would be included in the March 15 application. We need to keep track of our situation town wide so that we can respond quickly when the next program comes "down the pike", which is bound to happen as the politicians and the USDA get a better understanding of the importance of the issue for our towns and the difficulties we are facing. So what we are asking you to do is:

1. Go to the speed test website and do the test: here is the official link used statewide by ConnectME:

<https://speed.measurementlab.net/#/>

2. Write down the results and the date and time, and send them to me with your name and the address in Brooksville where you did the test.

3. Please do this at least once before the end of February. (I know this is frustrating to many of you who are seasonal residents and not in Brooksville at this time. I share your frustration, dismay, and yes, anger.)

Please talk about this with your friends and neighbors and encourage them to do the speed test.

(I just did mine tonight at 11 pm: 0.79 download, 0.84 upload.)

I will be happy to try to find answers to any questions you have, so don't hesitate to ask.

**#5...Aug 14, 2019**

We have some good news: the GWI application for a low-interest loan to build high speed internet (fiber to the home) in Brooksville is targeted to be submitted very soon - anticipated date is Sept 6.

After the application is submitted, of course there will be a lengthy review process by the USDA before funds are allocated and construction can commence.

But we will be one important step further along. Keep your fingers crossed.

And thank you to all (more than 140 people!) who answered the call in July to re-submit your online survey. I'm sure it helped!

If you have any questions, or further info about your current internet service (or lack thereof), please email or phone the undersigned.

#### #4...June 8, 2019

Greetings to the 237 who would like to be kept up to date on Brooksville broadband!

As you know, Kerem Durdag was in Brooksville on June 5, to tell us what's up with the GWI loan application. (He's GWI's Chief Operating Officer.) The discussion was lively and his remarks were well received. This morning I had confirmation of the schedule, as follows:

Brooksville is included in GWI's second application for this particular pot of USDA funds. The first application, which includes Blue Hill, will have a determination by USDA next month (barring unforeseen things like another government shutdown). Then our application will go into the pipeline in August, which will start a 6-month clock that USDA allows itself for reviewing an application, which brings us to February of 2020. Assuming the loan involving Brooksville is approved in February of 2020, there is still the construction phase, which could take as much as a year: i.e. it could be January/February of 2021 before you actually can start using high speed, reliable, fiber based internet in your home.

Also briefly discussed at the meeting on June 5th was the fact that if the Town tries to sign up with another entity on behalf of some residents (as Brooklin has recently done for areas of town that were totally without internet), it would completely mess up the loan application and Brooksville would essentially be unable ever to get back into the pipeline.

There has been a lot of news lately about various other funding opportunities for municipalities. Our review of them indicates that we would either not qualify, would have to pony up considerable cash, and/or would have to assume day-to-day system management. None of these options is preferable to what GWI is offering.

Questions were asked about cost - about \$50-60 per month (for 100 Mbps upload AND download) without phone service. Add another \$25 or so for phone, and you can "cut the cord" (phone cord) as they now say, which makes the total package quite attractive.

Briefly discussed at the meeting were some strategies for assuring that the internet is affordable and accessible by everyone in Town who wants it. Various subsidy strategies were mentioned: this subject has proven to be of interest to other towns in our region as well. Yesterday Stephanie MacLagan of the Island Institute said she would help us in our process of designing a strategy that makes sense for Brooksville. GWI has also indicated an interest in helping us figure this out. Your thoughts are welcome!

On the question of seasonal users, GWI would allow the service to be turned off, or at least down, but of course would need adequate time to respond on either end of the season.

There were also questions about when people would need to sign up for service. Basically, for construction efficiency, everyone who wants the service would need to sign up within a certain "window of time" after the loan is approved. If you missed the deadline and wanted to sign up months later, there might be an installation cost to bring the fiber to your home, but if you signed up within the window, there would not be an installation cost. (There would probably have to be some case-by-case discussions with people, if there are any, who have miles-long driveways, like those humorously mythical CCI customers in Snake Pond.)

Early in the design of the system, a location for the "brain" of the network would need to be found that is central, all-weather accessible, hooked up to electricity, and can accommodate a generator and air temperature controls. Some space with a footprint of about 10 feet square would be needed, either within an existing building, an addition to an existing building, or a stand-alone structure. Your ideas?

5G was brought up, and Kerem clarified that it is not an alternative solution to fiber. It requires even more installed fiber than our desired Fiber To The Premises (FTTP). It is mostly useful for things like self driving cars, it requires transmitters on every pole, and it is highly unlikely ever to be seen in a rural town like Brooksville. (From my perspective as a cell biologist, this is good news, as 5G has never been subjected to health and environmental risk assessment.) The newsworthy flurry of private satellite launchings was also brought up, and Kerem clarified that the most significant market for them will be countries like Africa which have no other options.

**Finally, GWI is very concerned about you folks who have been abandoned recently by Redzone or Premium Choice, and wants to help find an interim solution for you. Can you please let me know by return email what your current situation is? Have you signed up with Consolidated, or Hughes, or Dish Network, or are you using your cell phone? Or are you driving to the library?**

As you may know, a group of 8 towns has been meeting monthly for some time to discuss our internet woes and possible solutions. At our last meeting, the Deer Isle representative made the good suggestion that we develop a set of shared goals that each town can use to benchmark their proposed solutions. These goals could include universal, affordable, technically reliable, speedy access, that is "future proof". Sounds reasonable to me.

Please let me know what you are thinking, and ask any questions you would like me to find answers to.

#3...May 22 2019

Spring greetings already!

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 third update are:

1. Current status of the GWI loan application
2. Update on the Broadband Literacy project
3. Legislative action thoughts

1. Current status of the GWI loan application

As we are all aware, the government was shut down, meaning nobody in USDA could work on the loan applications they received. The shutdown and associated disruptions went on for almost two months, causing a delay in submitting the application for Brooksville, because the applications that were already in the pipeline before the shutdown have to clear before our application can go in. Also, because so much time has elapsed we may need to provide a little more survey data to show that we are still in the desperate situation we were in last year. If anything it's gotten worse for some of us. Premium Choice's Blue Hill tower was decommissioned, affecting people in the eastern part of town, and Redzone abandoned its customers served by its Belfast tower, affecting people in Harborside.

GWI has not abandoned us however. Kerem Durdag, the Chief Operating Officer, will be coming to Brooksville for a public meeting to explain what is going on and what to expect.

The meeting is scheduled for 6:30 p.m., Wednesday, June 5, 2019 at the Brooksville Town Hall, 1 Town House Road, Brooksville, Maine 04617

The meeting is open to the public and we are inviting representatives from neighboring towns as well. Hope you can make it! We're all in this together.

2. Update on the Broadband Literacy project

We are having a lot of trouble finding our target client base for this project. It is a bit like trying to push a rope! People who want to help should contact Doug Cowan, email [dougcowan@gmail.com](mailto:dougcowan@gmail.com), or talk to Brook Minner at the library. We "have computers, will travel" – but where would you like us to go, and what would you like to learn?

3. Legislative action thoughts

There are apparently a lot of bills at the state house trying in various ways to jump on the broadband bandwagon. Let's just say, some of the bills are more helpful than others. We'd like to get behind and support the bills that will really make a difference, but to do that, we need more information. Would you like to be on a legislation subcommittee that will help keep Brooksville in the know? Please contact me if you are interested in this – email or phone.

Thanks for your attention and unwavering interest in better internet for all the people in Brooksville!



#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/IO6LMaPmueY>. 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-remoteworkspace/?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-remoteworkspace/?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)

#1...Dec 8, 2018

Hello 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 first update are:

- an announcement of an upcoming hearing in Brooksville,
- the survey results,
- the progress of the GWI loan application, and
- notification of our application to Maine Community Foundation for a digital literacy grant.

### 1. Hearing

The PUC (Public Utility Commission) is venturing out of Augusta, coming to Brooksville Town House on Monday, December 17, at 6 pm. The objective is to hear directly from residents about poor LAND LINE service in town, the subject of a complaint they are studying (CASE NUMBER: 2018-00219 ). While this hearing is only about LAND LINE from Consolidated Communications and not internet service, we all know that the two services are intertwined in the same remote terminals that have leaky gaskets, and where there isn't enough room left in the box for some of you to get a DSL connection. You are welcome to attend the hearing. Be aware that they won't be listening to our complaints about poor internet, as they don't have regulatory authority over the internet. Unless, of course, you have been told you can't get a land line because of the internet hogging the box, or a CC field technician has told you that it's the internet that is somehow messing up your land line. That would be extremely relevant.

### 2. Survey results

**Service Providers:** number of customers and percent of total customers responding

CC 361 84.5%  
Premium 27 6.3%  
Hughes 7 1.6%  
USCell 15 3.5%  
ATT 9 2.1%  
Redzone 3 0.7%  
"Spectrum" 2 0.5%  
"hotspot" 1 0.2%  
"DirecTV" 1 0.2%  
"Emera" 1 0.2%

Total 427 respondents Includes 72 businesses/home businesses. Also, couples who each filled out the survey are counted separately.

**Satisfaction with existing internet:** 386 respondents, of whom 82% are dissatisfied, 18% satisfied. Some of the 427 respondents did not answer, others answered both satisfied and not satisfied so I didn't include them.

**Monthly payments you could make for really good internet:** 356 respondents

46% would pay \$26-50  
35% \$51-75  
17% \$76-100  
2% over \$100

**Speed survey:** 89 responded with download speeds, 80 responded with upload speeds

- There is a LOT of variation.
- Only a handful of customers have download speeds even remotely approaching the FCC minimum of 25.
- Excluding the seven "outliers" (library, school, and five customers reporting download speeds of 20 or above) the rest of us average 6.48 Mbps down and 0.73 up.
- A number of respondents have been told they cannot get DSL at all, because the remote terminal boxes are full.

### 3. GWI Progress

From GWI: "We are currently in the process of compiling all the survey data, creating the financial models and coupling with the details of the network design together with collating a large quantity of other required documentation.. After significant consultation with the USDA we are in good shape to submit the loan application by Jan 30, 2019 (an "extension" has been utilized) with anticipated preliminary assessment by April 2019 and if that is positive a decision by late summer 2019 (please note that if we are fortunate enough to get the loan, service will probably arrive in mid to late 2020). In the interim time, keep the conversation alive and gather thoughts/resources on how to enable digital inclusion/equity."

### 4. Application to Maine Community Foundation

On 10 October we submitted an application for funding a small grant to help Brooksville residents, particularly seniors (i.e. a large percent of our residents) become more "digitally literate" through hands-on, peer-based workshops at the library. We don't know the status of our request but awards will be announced in December.

The next time you hear from us will probably be after the December 17 PUC hearing, or when we hear from Maine Community Foundation!

If you wish to be removed from this distribution list, send me a return email.

Best regards,

Abbie for the Brooksville Broadband Committee

p.s. feel free to email questions and comments also.