

DRESDEN BROADBAND & TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE

Minutes February 27, 2023

Attending: Judy Tunkle, chair, members Joe Styczynski, Susan Lamb, Duck Brown, and Don Gleason, select board representative

Judy reported that tonight's planned session with Simon Thorne, senior governmental affairs manager of Consolidated Communications, has been postponed until Monday, March 9, due to a recent death in his family. The time will be 7 p.m. at Bridge Academy.

On Monday, March 2, committee members who are available will meet at 2 pm at Bridge Academy for a regional Zoom meeting with broadband proponents from Knox, Lincoln and Sagadahoc counties, plus Maine Connectivity Authority staff. The intent is to develop a plan and budget toward achieving digital equality among residents of the three counties.

Judy also noted that the next round of MCA funding grants is being delayed from an expected early spring target until sometime in June, which sets back planned construction of the broadband network in Dresden.

"The reality is this is now a 2025 project," Don said, adding more towns will be competing for the infrastructure grant money at this later date.

On the committee's recommendation, Dresden selectmen recently approved spending \$130,000 to enter a contract with Consolidated Communications and its fiberoptic arm, Fidium, to string fiberoptic cable to every house, business and several public sites in town. Lincoln County will reimburse half of the town cost.

Judy said she doesn't know the status of the memorandum of understanding being reviewed by the town and Consolidated attorneys. She said she and Paul Tunkle recently wrote an article about town broadband development for the next issue if the Communicator.

Members agreed to continue working on digital equity and try to obtain free computer devices for economically disadvantaged residents, and computer training for all interested residents.

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