

## Dresden Broadband & Technology Committee 6/5/2023

Attending: Judy Tunkle, chair, Don Gleason, selectboard representative, members Joe Stycznyski, Dave Hufstader, Susan Lamb

Don handed out copies of Maine Connectivity Authority guidelines for communities to apply for federal and state grants. He and Judy noted that proposed procedures seem substantially different from earlier guidelines, and tend to favor existing cable company monopolies like Spectrum and lend less support for new innovative technologies like fiberoptics. It seems that for smaller rural towns like Dresden, customers who have existing cable coverage would continue, and other providers would be allowed to compete only in unserved parts of town. Committee members expressed dismay as we'd worked diligently to achieve reliable internet service so all residents could experience fast speeds at lower costs.

Judy said she earlier spoke to Simon Thorne of Fidium/Consolidated Communications to see how the changes affect plans for Dresden. Fidium had been selected as a partner after a six-month review of providers and regional approaches. Thorne said he didn't get have an answer and was waiting for MCA clarification and new state maps delineating served and unserved areas expected to be released sometime in July.

Don said MCA also lowered the bar for internet speed goals from an initial 100/20 Mbps download/upload target to a less satisfactory 25/3 level.

Members decided to submit a letter to our federal and state elected officials that expresses for the reasons of our dismay and dissatisfaction with the agency revised stance, asking for oversight, and extra time as these revisions may force selection of a different ISP partner and regional approach.

The next committee meeting will be June 12 at 7 pm at Bridge Academy.

### OTHER COMMITTEE INVOLVEMENTS

On June 7, Judy, Don, Dick and Susan attended a statewide MCA Zoom conference where staff repeatedly referred to the proposed draft guidelines as "refinements" rather than major changes. Staff encouraged neighboring towns to partner in submitting grant applications, and work to leverage private and public money to achieve digital equality.

We did not feel reassured as Dresden lacks industry and larger businesses to approach for financing, and earlier had investigated and dismissed a regional approach for several reasons. Fidium had planned to apply for our grant by including Dresden with other Lincoln and Sagadahoc county towns.

On June 8, Don attended an MCA informational fair at the State House. He spoke with other Maine town reps who see the revised state guidelines as killing their chances in succeeding with grant applications this year.

## DRESDEN COMMITTEE MINUTES 6/12/23

Attending: Judy Tunkle, chair, Don Gleason, selectboard representative, Dave Huffstader, Dick Brown, Susan Lamb

The committee reviewed and revised a draft letter to elected officials. Susan will get a revised copy to committee members tomorrow.

We agreed that the pending new MCA maps will hold the key to how we proceed with the application process. We think we will have a slim chance in contesting or revising map details and may need to hire a firm to come up with accurate information. The application process opens Aug. 7, closes Sept. 21, and award announcements are planned for Nov. 17.