

Mahoosuc Community Broadband Committee

Meeting Minutes

1-28-22 – 12:00 p.m.

Committee members present:

Art Marshall (Albany)
Steve Smith (Albany)
Per Nygren (Albany)
Mike Muir (MSAD44)
Michele Varuolo Cole (Bethel)
Jeff Martin (Bethel)
Kim Sparks (Greenwood)
Steve Wight (Newry)
Vern Maxfield (Woodstock)
Marcel Polak (Woodstock)

Others in attendance: Andrew Weeks, Director Customer Operations for Redzone; Nyssa Compoginis, Manager of Community Development & Social Media for Redzone; Chad Plourde, Field Service Technician at Redzone; AE Jordan (Greenwood), Brian Lippold (Casco Bay Advisors), Mia Purcell (CCFC) and Mike Wilson (NFC)

Wireless technology presentation by Redzone

Andrew Weeks presented Redzone's proposal for providing wireless internet service to residents in the Mahoosuc region.

- The overall cost of installing wireless service would be \$4,306,500 at \$799 per location. Customers could receive speeds of 500/100 Mbps and 100% of all locations in the area would be eligible for service, including uneconomic and off grid locations.
- Installation of equipment on towers could begin in 30 days and be completed in 12 months. Service could be activated in 90 days.
- Redzone does not build or own towers; rather, it leases space on existing cellular towers.
- Redzone is a Maine owned and operated company that is based in Rockland, ME.
- Google reviews of Redzone's service give it an overall rating of 4.0.
- Redzone would install Tarana technology which can provide up to 10 Gbps speeds. Redzone has installed this technology as a pilot in Rockland.
- Tarana will serve 256 customers per sector at 2.4 Gbps, up to four sectors per tower for a total of 10 Gbps.
- The towns would not have liability for network operation.
- Redzone's rates are locked in and include: 100/20 Mbps @ \$50, 100/100 Mbps @ \$79, and up to 500/100 Mbps @ \$99. There are no data caps or contract.
- There is an installation fee of \$100 for an antenna outside a home and a monthly charge of \$8 for a WiFi router.

- Andrew reviewed a map showing coverage for each town:
 - There are lots of gaps in service in Albany. A repeater solution would be used to reach uncovered locations.
 - Newry is well covered except for the Bear River Road toward Grafton Notch.
 - Two towers would provide service to Gilead.
 - Seven towers would provide service to Bethel.
 - Greenwood and Woodstock would be well covered and served by four and five towers, respectively.
 - Milton Plantation would be well covered by three towers.
 - In all 14 towers with 26 repeaters would serve the seven-community Mahoosuc region.
- The region as a whole would be asked to contribute \$10,000 for radio network planning or analysis that would be done by Tarana or Wisper Internet, which owns Tarana.
- The wireless equipment has a life of 10 years before it has to be replaced.

OuterReach Broadband was mentioned as another wireless provider. Its service delivers 100/10 Mbps and uses Ericsson Technology which cannot compete with Tarana's speeds.

There was a question about possible health issues related to wireless technology. None were mentioned.

Litchfield is contracting with Redzone to install Tarana technology. Brian Lippold suggested that the Committee would need to delay making a decision about Redzone for at least six months if it wants to wait for the results of Litchfield's experience with Redzone.

A question was asked if ConnectMaine will consider funding wireless technology and if Redzone is interested in applying for ConnectMaine grant funds.

Review proposal from FirstLight and other provider updates

Brian Lippold reported that FirstLight's latest proposal asks the towns in the Mahoosuc region to contribute \$7.5 million toward a network expansion and FirstLight would cover \$2.5 million. Brian commented that he feels FirstLight is asking the towns to finance too much of the project. He added that FirstLight is not in good standing with ConnectMaine and would not be eligible to apply for grant funding at this time.

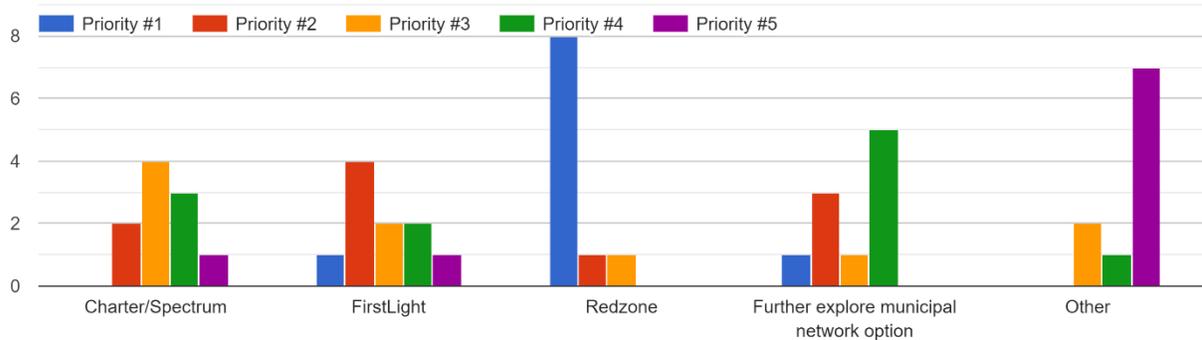
Brian updated the Committee on Charter's status:

- Charter (Spectrum) will not be participating in the current ConnectMaine grant program.
- Charter's proposal for the Mahoosuc region will not include Milton because Consolidated was awarded RDOF funds to deliver service there.
- Charter's proposal would use EPON, not GPON, which is older technology, and it would not limit data caps.

Discussion of the direction of the Committee’s work

Below are the results of a short survey that Committee members who attended the meeting were asked to fill in.

If you had to choose now, based on what you know from Brian’s work and the input/proposals from providers, what would be your choice or recommended direction going forward – with #1 being your top priority?



Michele Cole suggested that the Committee’s report to the towns be a progress report, not a recommended strategy. She also spoke to the importance of the towns recommitting their ARPA funds for broadband and being asked to create a reserve fund for broadband as additional funding for a broadband expansion project.

GWI has expressed an interest in presenting to the Committee. A presentation by GWI will be scheduled in February.