

**Bremen Broadband Committee Meeting Minutes**  
**September 2019 - November 2019**

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**Bremen Broadband Committee**  
**September 26, 2019**  
**5:30pm Bremen Library**

Committee Members Present: Christa Thorpe, Matthew Hanly, Sam Hafford, Brian Withers

Committee Members Absent: Ernie Carroll

Introductions

- Christa Thorpe -Nobleboro Rd resident, Island Institute community development officer
- Matthew Hanly - spent summers here whole live, lives on Fogler Rd, frustrated by lack of high speed internet; school board member; pretty good cell service
- Elaine Stevens - recently moved back to Maine after 20 years in FL, born brought up in Maine, used to FL service, but “service here is like waiting for the paint to dry”
- Reggie Stevens - retired, but still has tax clients - needs high speed internet for work
- Sam Hafford - broadband committee, background in construction of internet networks & fiber optics
- Brian Withers - works for Cisco systems, has the resources to get Bremen Broadband Committee access to Cisco’s resources for data & analysis and other tools
- Marty Forrest - Does online consulting, concern about monthly affordability
- Niel Ross, lives in Muscongus, helps people “cut the cord” - Sportz TV, at home currently getting 6mbps, paying \$111/mo for that plus the phone -- would be willing to do free classes on cutting the cord

Discussion of Tidewater/LCI Proposal:

- Proposed Prices: \$70/50mbps - \$90/100mbps and \$100 installation that can be applied to monthly
- Tidewater = ILEC (incumbent local exchange carrier) and LCI = CLEC (Competitive...)
- ConnectME goal is to cover 20% of the cost of a build-out -- need to clarify this, because Tidewater’s proposal has ConnectME covering almost 50%
  - Committee member commented: This process seems to work backwards - Communities first need to choose a company to work with, rather than being funded then getting to put out to bid
  - Decisions made based on headcount, less populated areas don’t have the density to attract ISP
- Neil spoke on getting signatures from community members about their interest in competition noting that “Spectrum is hungry to get customers.” Others have heard very negative perceptions of Spectrum
- Bremen has space on the poles for multiple providers

- CMP is the “wireless network” that touches every house on the grid in Bremen since every meter is a smart wireless meter

#### Bremen Goals:

- Need high-speed, reliable, affordable FTTH in Bremen
  - Explore creative options such as feasibility of setting up mesh networks (ubiquity.com)
- Maintain the ability to have choice and competition
- Explore municipal ownership and invite providers to compete on it (open access?)
- Due diligence for Bremen residents - exploring other providers through RFPs
- Working regionally with Bristol
- Conduct a survey to gain wider perspective of community priorities

#### Next Meeting: October 10th - 5:30

#### Actions:

- Ask selectmen “Does the town have a revenue source from power utilities for poles in our right of way?”
  - Thorpe to reach out Bristol broadband, ask if they have a meeting coming up and offer to attend to explore regional collaboration
  - Thorpe will send out minutes and put Draft minutes on website
  - Thorpe ask Peggy Schaeffer at ConnectME whether Tidewater/LCI have already applied
  - Need help with legal framework - Ask selectboard (Ernie?)
  - Possible future action: Hafford could have meeting with CMP if needed
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**Bremen Broadband Committee Agenda**  
**October 10, 2019**  
**5:30pm Bremen Library**

**BB Committee Members Present:** Christa Thorpe, Ernie Carroll, Matthew Hanly, Sam Hafford, Brian Withers

- Approval of 9/26 Minutes with spelling corrections
- Introductions: New attendees to this meeting included Bremen resident Henry Goldberg, Telecommunications lawyer practicing in Washington DC, represents private companies before the FCC, did some early work for Netflix. Alan Hinsey from Tidewater/LCI also attended the meeting.
- ConnectME Updates
  - Christa Thorpe shared answers from Peggy Schaeffer (director of ConnectME) to our questions about the ConnectME grant application process. An internet service provider *can* apply for a grant alone, without direct involvement of the town. From Peggy: “LCI has not applied for a grant for Bremen. I think they are talking about using RUS or other funding available to them because Bremen is in their ILEC footprint.”
  - Alan Hinsey shared that LCI has received 14 ConnectME grants. They have worked all 3 ways (applying alone, community applying and hiring Tidewater, and doing it as a partnership -- they prefer the partnership)
    - Most recent successes were Bowdoinham/LCI and Alna/Tidewater
    - LCI is now working with other ILEC groups - Lincolnville, Bristol
  - Hanly asked about ConnectME funding mix - goal to cover 20% the cost of build out
  - Rating system includes more - Participation points - cost per home passed (under \$500)
  - Community Participation: Need to get 85% of 283 homes that would be served to say yes on a survey - we would support that
  - RUS funds - grants and loans available - Tidewater is interested in RUS loan funds for project
- Bremen poles update (Sam, Ernie)
  - Ernie will follow up with Hank to get answers
  - CMP can see all the meters in the neighborhood; Smart network
- Generate ideas for potential Island Institute Planning Grant Application (group)
  - Andrew Hinkley - 207-659-9900 → Sam Hafford recommends for helping discuss the planning grant - negotiated pole attachment agreement with CMP
  - Christa will invite Island Institute to answer questions about planning grant
- Tidewater - 8 miles of fiber: 94 customers do have fiber, 83 could but don't -- need to explore why
  - Hinsey: If another company is willing to build out fiber for \$400,000, we should take their opportunity, but Tidewater is committed to improving service for its ILEC customers
  - Hafford: Will it be an overlash build out? Alan assumes so. Would be hard to beat the cost
  - For Alna and Bowdoinham, Tidewater helped create the online survey
  - Carroll will ask selectboard about information on other providers
- October 28<sup>th</sup> & 29<sup>th</sup> Bremen reps to [Maine Broadband Summit](#)
  - Sam Hafford & Ernie Carroll

Next meeting - October 24th - 5:30

Actions- RFP from selectboard to ISPs? / Planning Grant brainstorm

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## October 24, 2019

**BB Committee Members Present:** Christa Thorpe, Ernie Carroll, Matthew Hanly, Sam Hafford, Brian Withers

**Selectmen Present:** Bo Marsh, Hank Nevins

- **Approval of 10/11 minutes - MH moved, Sam second, Approved**
- **Discussion:** A Lincoln County News report from the recent paper implied that the select board was discussing and moving ahead on broadband plans with Tidewater. Bo Marsh and Hank Nevins attended tonight's broadband committee meeting to get on the same page.
  - **Select board report** - Bo shared out that broadband was an item on the agenda and the article captured what had been shared. In response to Mr. Hanly's feeling of the committee needing to be notified Hank reported that all committees should send a representative to select board meetings. Discussion of the protocol moving forward - how to prevent miscommunication and lack of transparency between
- **Discussion of Revised proposal from Tidewater**

Alan Hinsey said Tidewater got the signal that Bremen doesn't want to pitch in the money and they're willing to work with us without a cash match. Tidewater is going to build out FTTP anyway and they want to do it quicker with town partnership. ConnectME round is March 2020 so we need to be ready to apply for that jointly. If the town doesn't join, Tidewater will apply by themselves. Committee will work together on surveys, participation. Tidewater doesn't see the need for a planning grant, can do own design, has the data they need. Total still around \$400k, \$95k from ConnectME because it's under \$100k and it makes price per home \$350, About the same amount of ConnectME funds and 165 served in Alna.

Sam Hafford reiterated the question of whether the build will be an overlash? That's the fastest, cheapest way, and Alan agrees that they'll likely do whatever is fastest and cheapest. Hinsey pointed out that if successful, the build would be done by June we'd be one of the first 100% FTTP towns in Maine.

Hank: Questions about numbers - We have 668 metered locations in Bremen. Currently 94+83+283 = 400 -- Want to ensure that all homes will be served. Hinsey agrees that number may go up after detailed survey. To the question of whether there will be a seasonal rate, they don't know yet.

Committee members raised questions about pricing -- will these prices be locked in? Hinsey responded there's a 3 year contract to get those rates - \$200 to break the contract

Question was raised regarding how the town can hold Tidewater accountable - The ConnectME grant is one accountability tool but there's limited capacity for ongoing oversight. To ensure the project's success, Tidewater wants a presale of 140 homes (50% of total new build). ConnectME is looking for efficiency for every dollar they spend - also, grantees must finish project within 12 months. Alan Hinsey reiterated their goal is to do what makes sense for both parties.

- **Town survey? Table to next meeting:** The committee can do a survey gauging interest -- Alan said they have contact info for all Tidewater customers. We have 330 people on Bremen email list - so Tidewater can send out the link for us to use.

At the committee's request, Alan left to let the group deliberate on their own. Former Waldoboro broadband committee member Seth Hall shared about challenges with lack of control over Tidewater's pricing changes. This is something the committee will keep in mind for negotiations in the agreement. Hall explained that Tidewater's fiber build in downtown Waldoboro provided fantastic, reliable service, but the rest of Waldoboro still has poor out-of-date coverage.

Downtown Waldoboro customers used to have 100meg symmetrical for \$49.95 (side note from Seth - fiber IS the answer and Tidewater's Fiber service has been incredible). Hall explained that when he asked for a second line, the terms changed, and even as a presently contracted subscriber - he'd be asked to pay \$190/month for 100 symmetrical. Hall is hosting a meeting at the Bug Tussle annex in Waldoboro to discuss broadband connectivity for entire midcoast region -- watch the paper, will happen before Thanksgiving (**Update: Meeting scheduled for Nov. 14**). Mr. Hall is inviting members from other municipalities interested in broadband expansion - the reason for the meeting is to share information and discuss the possibility of more public accountability and ownership over broadband utilities.

The committee decided to take time to consider all of the information around the proposal and to make a final decision about moving forward with Tidewater at the next meeting on **October 31, 2019**.

**Meeting adjourned** at 7:00.

## October 31, 2019

Bremen Broadband Committee meeting - 5:30 Bremen Library

**BB Committee Members Present:** Christa Thorpe, Ernie Carroll, Matthew Hanly, Sam Hafford

**Absent:** Brian Withers

**Others Present:** Mary Ellen Barnes, director of Lincoln County Regional Planning Commission; Autumn Mahoney, associate member & communications volunteer; Marty Forrest; Dave Herbert.

**Discussion:**

- Mary Ellen Barnes reported on the LCRPC 7 Towns Planning Grant process
- Hafford, Carroll, and Thorpe reported out on the Maine Broadband Summit
- Committee discussed message to Select Board regarding working relationship
  - BB Committee will send a member to the committee
  - When the committee has recommendations, we pass them on to the select board
  - Select board is concerned with the time-sensitive aspect of it -- want the committee to make a decision as quickly as possible to hit the grant
  - BB Committee provided Bo and Hank with some background about trust issues with Tidewater -- Marty was frustrated with the charging of \$100 to change contract -- his pricing is currently \$130 a month
  - Mary Ellen can help us understand the ConnectME process (whether that grant comes to the town or can go straight from the ISP)
  - Town attorney can look over the draft of an agreement (MOU between Tidewater and Bremen)
  - Formal letter of intent from Tidewater -- to include in a survey to the town

- Next Steps:
  - First, sit down with Tidewater to discuss the proposal:
    - Roles of each party
    - Reasons for not moving forward at this moment and request a formal intent/best deal from Tidewater -- outline our requests:
      - Specific Contract Terms: What is the deal for each homeowner -- real prices, installation responsibility (distance, every address served), 3-year scope of rates, service, seasonal resident arrangement, as much detail as possible (installation subsidies for Bremen residents)
    - After getting their formal letter of intent, we can come back to the table with our needs:
      - Interested in a better deal for seasonal residents (65% of town)
      - Don't want to impact our ability to get competition in the future -- Long term goal to bring some alternatives in or explore maintaining our own infrastructure
    - If we get satisfactory response from Tidewater - share the letter of intent through a survey, forum, etc.
  - **Survey/Forum** - Autumn Mahoney: we should go ahead and do a survey anyway
    - Gather data that we can pass on to other vendors for RFP if desired
  - Discussion on whether to pursue RFP: Given the position of Tidewater as Bremen's "ILEC" (Incumbent Local Exchange Company) building FTTP will be drastically cheaper for Tidewater than any other company, because Tidewater can access federal RUS loans for their ILEC areas.
  - When we get the letter from Tidewater, it would be a good time for our committee and the select board to sit down with our town attorney (Henry Goldberg volunteered to help this process)

Action:

- Email MLSN about Bremen Library speeds
- Thorpe respond to Tidewater/LCI that we appreciate the proposal and want to move forward with shaping an agreement. We need a formal proposal with details of the plan & pricing. This would allow us to survey the town on whether they would support the actual plan -- be as specific as possible
  - Survey includes: Would you be willing to support the proposal from Tidewater
  - Another question - how many Bremen seasonal residents turn off their phone service; How many current DSL customers are there?
- Autumn will write up a press release on the committee's progress so far

Next Meeting: Nov. 21st - Would like 1 week to review (request proposal be sent by Nov. 14th)

**Working Groups - to be confirmed next meeting**

- Terms of Agreement working group -- Brian, Sam, Matthew
- Survey Working Group -- Christa & Ernie

**Announcements:**

- Nov. 14 Bug Tussle - Matthew Hanly might attend
  - Nov. 7th Select Board Meeting - Ernie Carroll
  - Nov. 21st - Christa tentatively attend select board meeting at 5pm then head to 5:30 Broadband mtg
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**Bremen Broadband Committee**  
**November 21, 2019**  
**Bremen Library**  
**5:30 - 6:36**

**Committee Members Present:** Matthew Hanly, Christa Thorpe, Ernie Carrol, Brian Withers, Sam Hafford on phone  
Other attendees: Bremen residents Henry Goldberg, Bennett Collins, Dave Herbert

**Discussion:**

Intro: We were hoping to focus the whole agenda of this meeting on discussion of the formal Proposal from Tidewater for FTTP build out in Bremen, but having not yet received the proposal, so we did some discussion and brainstorming instead. Committee members acknowledged that we're in a place where we don't have a lot of options, but that we can leverage our position as an important story for Tidewater/LCI - they will need to use marketing funds for the planning and grant application process. Community involvement creates a more successful grant application.

**Terms of Agreement - Brainstorming**

- Don't preclude future competition (leave make-ready space on the poles)
- Timeline -- LCI will stick to their proposed time -- Penalty if build out isn't done on time?
- Affordability -- Comcast's Internet Essentials program
- Existing customers' rates same as new rates = standard for whole town
- Fix rates -- most favored nation treatment, no one else gets lower rate
- Give 90 days notice before rate change
- Seasonal resident pricing option
- Equal Access to All - no matter where you live in Bremen your home would have access to the same speeds and reliability as any other resident
- How company will deal with service interruptions and the restoration times

**Other considerations in this process:** Dealing with history of Tidewater's last ConnectME grant funded build out in Bremen and residents' memory that "they didn't deliver" on the original proposal -- "Progress moves at the speed of trust." **Post-meeting Update:** Tidewater Telecom requested clarity from the town and committee about this history -- why did community members feel that Tidewater had not come through in the past? Thorpe looked up the past ConnectME grant application and confirmed that Tidewater Telecom **had** completed the project as described in the ConnectME application which was reviewed by the Select Board of Bremen. There was a misunderstanding in the community that the more recent fiber build (down Keene Neck Rd and a few others) would be a fiber install to the whole town, but this was not mentioned in any documents. Alan Hinsey's reponse to the community misunderstanding: "We work hard to provide exceptional customer service and to always fulfill all deliverables on our projects and contracts (note – all of our 13 ConnectME projects have been completed 100% - on time and within budget). We are human and we make mistakes – but when that happens, our company philosophy is to take responsible and take corrective action as soon as possible."

**Next Steps**

- Survey & Public Forum Committee (Christa & Ernie)

- Find out whether LCI survey can be customized by town with town access to results
- If we do our own survey, what are the costs? Can we use LCRPC Survey Monkey account?
- Note -- for hard copy surveys: Special mailing rate through library
- Brian willing to help visualize data using software
- Survey work session next Wednesday 11/27 at 11am-1pm
- Terms of Agreement Committee (Brian Withers, Matthew Hanly, and Henry Goldberg)
  - Will work by email to shape our terms of agreement on LCI proposal when we receive it
- "Competition" Committee (Sam) - explore other ISP interest in Bremen, as well as potential models for municipal network; consult with Andy Hinkley

**Survey Questions Brainstorm** - plan to take much of survey content from Jefferson survey and LCRPC

- Do you favor the town owning its broadband infrastructure? (like firetruck, roads, etc)
- Digital literacy question

**Next Meeting:** Dec. 19, 2019 at Library 5:30-6:30pm

**EMAILED Notes/Feedback on Proposal Rec'vd 11/25/19**

- 1 Does the 23 miles of fiber include private roads/ entrances?
- 2 How many address's are there in Bremen.  $94 + 83 = 177$ ,  $177 + 283 = 460$  per TWT calculations.
- 3 What about future developments
- 4 50% of pre sale could be high (is this a mandate by connect me)
- 5 What will open for business pricing be? do we need to differentiate residential or business as this is not a regulated service.
- 6 is there an additional cost for live streaming TV and if so how much
- 7 can customer provide private (customer provided equipment cpe) if constructed to specifications?
- 8 With a begin date of 8/1/20, what will the completion date be? how many days to construct and have total services deployed?
- 9 service interruptions and the restoration times
- 10 "Bremen to assist in the marketing and pre sale of 50% of new homes." What is meant by new homes?
- 11 What are the additional cost for symmetrical speeds
- 12 Limited time ( June 30, 2020) price guaranteed
- 13 \$1 a month for battery back up
- 14 define cost for seasonal plans
- 15 limited time offer on p4
- 16 Language to address subsidies for low-income residents?
- 17 What happens if 140 pre-buy application goal isn't attained?
- 18 worried about the tight timeline and amount of work to do to gain the support necessary to make this happen



**December 19, 2019 DRAFT Minutes**  
**Thursday 5:30pm at the Bremen Library**

**AGENDA**

1. Draft response to Tidewater's Proposed Agreement for Bremen fiber build-out  
Committee discussed key questions and concerns regarding the proposal:
  - 283 homes might be further off than they think. According to Brian's data, there are 613 addresses in Bremen; TWT has 460 total addresses
  - Pricing Questions: What is the O.P.E.N. for Business pricing?
    - Please provide details about the "seasonal plan"
    - We would like same price-per-speed for everyone, not distinguish between residential and business (we're trying to encourage small business) - charge more for higher capacity needs
  - We want symmetrical speeds 50/50 and 100/100
  - Price to lease modem?
  - We want the advertised LCI pricing of \$50 with option of no landline
  - What is the result if the 50% pre-buy is not attained? (Since we're signing this agreement)
  - Why is the battery back up required? If this is non-negotiable, please clarify how this serves the customer - details regarding service interruptions and restoration time.
  - \$10 for state minimum speed (25/5) for low-income families

Next Step: Christa will send the questions/points in an email to TWT

Request responses by Friday Jan. 3rd; Our goal is to get an agreement signed by the 13th of January

Henry Goldberg: When we have a revised proposal addressing the questions, the committee will draft an MOU that both parties would sign regarding Bremen's part of the deal

Thorpe asked the committee a final question regarding potential support from Island Institute for LCI: Committee responded that as long as it doesn't hinder our process, Island Institute providing a planning grant to Tidewater is fine with the committee.

Before next meeting:

- Finalize survey and action plan for community outreach
- Plan public forum on Broadband for January 23rd

Action: Mr. Carroll will try to find out how many Bremen residents are on public assistance of some kind to give Tidewater a rough number since we're requesting a commitment around low-income subsidies.

**Next Meetings:** Thursday, January 9, 2020 at 5:30pm. Christa Thorpe will be absent.  
Thursday, January 23, 2020 at 5:30pm followed by Public Forum?