**Surry Broadband Meeting
Tuesday, May 24, 2022
Surry Fire Station Room**

Meeting with **Premium Choice**

**Attendees:**

Bill Matlock, George Borowsky, Chris Stark, Phil Roberts, Heather Brackett and Bob Reder

Premium Choice: Bill Varney, CEO Premium Choice and Brian Lippold,Casco Bay Advisors

The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the Premium Choice proposal to build the portions of Surry that do not have high speed internet fiber access and are underserved or unserved.

**Toddy Pond Rd build out update:**

They have the material (fiber, etc.) ready to go and had collected the pole data and are on a waiting with PUC for the final licenses. PUC is behind schedule (over 6 months). There is a $20 a year rental fee for the use of every pole. Estimated time to complete project – possibly September, 2022. They will be advertising their services when they are further along in the process.

**Premium Choice Proposal**

Bill and Brian presented their Spectrum Overbuild Project to provide high speed fiber access to all Surry residents. The map of the areas to be served by fiber to the premises (FTTP) was compiled from 911 addressing data, aerial imagery and was an overlay of main roads that Spectrum serves/could potentially serve. Spectrum overbuild project – 1, 150,000, PCB investment -$400,000, local/state subsidy - $750,000.

For a proposal to be eligible for broadband grants would need to address least served, unserved, underserved. There is currently no timeline for broadband grants/expected by this fall.

All broadband grants funneled through the Maine Connectivity Authority would focus on #s unserved, survey info., whether the town has a working Broadband Committee, is doing public outreach, and would be making a financial investment of some kind

Premium Choice said that they won’t charge exorbitant hookup fees for residents that are .5 miles from a telephone pole. They said PC has a standard fee for homes that are clustered around telephone poles.

**Challenges in collaborating with ISP to apply for funds:**

Having accurate information about residents that are served/underserved/unserved by the internet. Maine Connectivity Authority uses FCC maps that have erroneous information about who is underserved and unserved. Surry appears to be a Town that is served by 3 internet providers. They raised the speed range for underserved under 100/20 mbps underserved – 50/10 mbps. The Maine Connectivity Authority maintains that it is the responsibility of Internet Service Providers (ISPs) to have correct information about who is unserved/underserved. If a property abuts where cable TV is, you are considered “served” and, therefore, don’t need internet service.

Brian reported that the telephone poles on the portion of Route 172 (Surry Road) appear to be too short to have the proper spacing for adding fiber lines.

Spectrum has cables through the areas unserved/underserved but the FCC considers that people have access to internet through Spectrum when they do not or couldn’t afford the hook up. Some areas that are said to be covered by Spectrum are offshoots with no connection to their main arteries. Ex. Route 172 (near Ellsworth border) and Route 176 (Near Blue Hill border)

An IPS may not want to build out in areas where Spectrum has cable because Spectrum customers may state that they are unsatisfied with internet service but are reluctant to give up their cable for high-speed internet. They said that the average “take rate” pattern for switching from a cable provider is around 10%. Premium Choice had a “take rate” of around 30% from Spectrum customers after having publicized their services heavily in Dover Foxcroft.

Fiber prices have gone up 20% in the past year.

Communities need to help promote sign up to ISP – hold community meetings, etc.

Need local financial commitment – Swans Island had $50,000 invested.

Brian said we would talk to John Dougherty – about the feasibility of having ARPA funds through Hancock County support a fiber build out in Surry and that he might be able to draft an RFP if Surry would be willing to help pay for the time it would take to draft a proposal.

**Surry Broadband Committee**  decided that it will need to process this conversation and follow up with other ISPs.