

## **Broadband in Blue Hill – the time is now**

Life in beautiful Blue Hill has many advantages but it's fair to say, consistent internet coverage is not one of them. This has been Ok - until now. Covid-19 highlighted how reliant we are on using the internet to keep us connected and help us function in every area of our lives: access to healthcare, education, business, remote working, faith practices, staying connected to family and friends from a safe distance, to name a few.

In Blue Hill, the Pandemic has compounded some of our existing issues further. For example:

- Community is unequally served: internet coverage and quality of connection is inconsistent
- Some areas have no access to internet services at all
- Best internet access remains at the Library and Schools
- Current providers are close to capacity with soon-to-be outdated technology.

We are not alone. The Pandemic has substantially raised the issue of the need for reliable broadband in rural communities at the federal, state and local levels.

**Broadband access for rural communities has been a goal in the past but now, it's a priority. There is real help available at the State and Federal level to help communities like ours get the technology we need.** Here's what we know:

- Maine ranks near the bottom in the Nation for internet connectivity, behind all New England states.
- Results from the 2010 census showed that Maine has 61.3% of the total population living in rural areas - one of the highest in the country.
- Federal and state governments are committed to supporting broadband expansion into rural communities
- Funds and support **now** available for rural communities
  - 2021 - State of Maine has made \$15m available
  - 2021 - Federal government providing \$129m to the state
- Opportunity is now – and 10+ years from now
  - Growing examples of how towns have improved with broadband installations in Maine, New England and across the country
  - Solutions under consideration are looking at ubiquitous, gigabyte, fiber-based internet, meaning it will take access for every resident and home into consideration and the technology will need to support us into the future
  - Neighboring towns on the Blue Hill Peninsula are pursuing broadband for their communities
  - Access to funding

We have the opportunity to bridge the technology divide and bring a service to our community that will help us **live, work, and play**, better by giving us access to 21<sup>st</sup> century internet.

## **If we were to bring Broadband to Blue Hill, what would change?**

- Create opportunities for our youth by giving them greater access to employment opportunities/entrepreneurship – from right here in our beautiful Town
- Provide solutions to key workforce challenges: distance learning, remote working
- Improve delivery and reduce costs of key services e.g., health care and education
- Help retain local businesses and residents
- Provide jobs, attract new industry, create opportunities

- Improve property values – buyers increasingly expect internet connectivity
- Support businesses that wish to trade 365
- Offer greater access to online entertainment/recreation

Please visit this site regularly for more information, [click here](#) to learn more about what is happening across the Blue Hill Peninsula or contact Butler Smythe at: [thbsmythe@gmail.com](mailto:thbsmythe@gmail.com)

Release 2 – Week ending June 8th

So, what is broadband? How is it different than the internet?

## **What is broadband and why is broadband access important?**

---

### **The Basics**

The term broadband refers to high-speed internet access. Broadband is different from dial-up internet service for several reasons, including the following:

- Broadband service provides a higher-speed of data transmission.
- Broadband provides access to the highest quality internet services, such as videoconferencing for telehealth, that require large amounts of data transmission.
- Broadband access is constant. It does not block phone lines, and there is no need to reconnect each time you need to use the internet.

### **Why Broadband is Important**

Broadband is important for rural communities because it offers residents reliable and fast internet which in turn provides access to better healthcare without having to travel, distant learning and further education, supports small businesses reach more customers, and allows us access to TV, games and other entertainment from the comfort of our homes. (Jenn/Lori, I added this – FYI)

For rural health care providers interested in meaningfully using electronic health records, as many of the capabilities of health IT, such as telehealth and electronic exchange of health care information, require broadband capability.

Source: [HealthIT.gov](http://HealthIT.gov)

### **What is the Internet?**

The **Internet** is a vast network that connects computers all over the world. Through the **Internet**, people can share information and communicate from anywhere with an **Internet** connection

### **What solution is Blue Hill looking for?**

Ubiquitous Gigabyte Fiber-based Internet. Huh?

**Gigabit Internet** runs on a **fiber-optic** line, which is capable of much higher speeds than the traditional copper lines of most DSL and cable connections.

In other words, we are looking for a solution for Blue Hill that will give us the broadband that will allow us to have more reliable and faster internet access by working with partners to change out our existing infrastructure and ensure it reaches every home in our community. In a nutshell, that is what this project is all about.