



Town of Rockport, Maine

Town Manager's Office

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Ex parte communication in proceeding numbers 14-115 and 14-116

I am writing on behalf of the Town of Rockport's efforts in the past year and a half to provide high speed internet to the residents of Rockport Maine and weigh in on the petitions from Wilson, NC (14-115) and Chattanooga, TN (14-116) that are before the FCC. We are one of the signatories of a letter sent in January to the FCC in support of local choice and one of the Founding Partners of the Next Century Cities organization.

Rockport is a small coastal community in mid-coast Maine of about 3,200 residents. We pride ourselves on the beauty of the region and the simplicity of life here. The mid-coast of Maine has become a haven for creativity and entrepreneurs both young and old. Many come here because of the sense of "place" we have here and then try and find ways to make a living as opposed to coming for a job. Access to the internet and high speed broad band allows people to be free of geography and work here they live, rather than live where they work.

This spring and summer Rockport undertook the first steps towards constructing our municipally owned dark fiber network that would provide fiber service to all residents of town and as a model for surrounding towns. While less than 1.5 miles in length, it is the first in the State of Maine. To us, extending broadband to our residents is as normal as providing water and sewer and good roads. Imagine for a minute if we expected our highways to be built by the trucking companies. We would likely have really good highways to certain places and not so good highways, to others.

The old model that drove our economy was centered on factories and manufacturing. Beyond workers, they needed water, sewer and natural gas. The new model of economic growth is built on a mobile and connected workforce that is less reliant on traditional manufacturing and more reliant on speed and connectivity. Access to high speed broadband is no longer a luxury, it is a necessity. It is every bit as important as water, sewer and natural gas, and in some cases, it is more important. We are not talking about users ability to download Netflix or gaming, we are talking about the ability of people to work and be creative.

To restrict a municipalities ability to step up and provide a creative solution to problems, is bad policy. In many cases, municipalities have been able to step up and solve problems in ways that were unable to be solved in any other way. There is no "one size fits all" approach that will work everywhere, although the big telecom companies, that control the access to the internet, are attempting to do just that. They



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have had many years of control of the market and we continue to fall behind in the global digital divide. Allowing local autonomy preserves community's right to do what is best for our residents.

For example, we have struggled locally with small insignificant fixes to our broadband needs. Token attempts to get speeds businesses needed to continue to be viable were offered up by service providers. In one quick step we were able to provide gigabit service to a small part of our community. We are working now on getting it to every home and business. The questions being asked now are "when and how", not how much.

The network we are building is dark fiber and we believe that this will allow smaller, more innovative companies to be competitive, offer better service, at a lower cost. We believe strongly that competition and local autonomy is the key to success in providing next generation broadband. Further we understand that while the FCC's only directly affects Tennessee and North Carolina, it will certainly send a strong message to our state legislators who are being lobbied right now to support legislation that will limit our ability to do what we have done here in Rockport and is being considered in communities around the State of Maine.

For this reason Rockport Maine is calling on the FCC commissioners to support our ability to make the best choices for our community, by supporting the petitions of Chattanooga, TN and Wilson NC.