The Whitefield Economic Development Committee wishes to inform the town about a development which has the potential to improve broadband internet access and cell phone reception in the town. As most people probably know, a proposal to run a high voltage electric power line from Quebec through Maine to Massachusetts is currently under consideration. A spur of that line would go through Whitefield using the existing power line right-of-way. While towns have no authority to approve or disapprove the project, many towns from Jackman to Wiscasset are negotiating with CMP for local benefits regardless of their power line opinions and the PUC is expected approve or disapprove this spring.

CMP has informed the town in writing that if the project goes forward and the line is built, they will add features to the fiber optic cable already planned to be part of the line which could be important in bringing more and better broadband access to the town and could also allow measures to improve cell phone reception in parts of the town where it is currently weak. On January 18, Thorn Dickinson, CMP Vice President for Business Development, wrote the committee to say that CMP is

“committed to install spare fibers in optical ground wire in the proposed Section 3027 transmission line that could be utilized for “middle mile” communication transport to the Whitefield area. These spare fibers in the optical ground wire can be used for many types of communication transport, including broadband internet and cellular phone.”

Specifically, CMP has promised to add “splice enclosures” to the CMP fiber cable at seven points where the proposed power line crosses roads in Whitefield, including Route 17, Route 126, Route 194, and Route 218. In Wiscasset, the CMP fiber optic cable would also plug into the Three Ring Binder which is a major element of Maine’s infrastructure for bringing high-speed broadband to underserved rural areas. These proposed facilities would open up the possibility for internet and cell phone providers to offer high-speed connections to the world more quickly and easily than if they had to start from scratch themselves.

The Economic Development Committee is committed to improving internet and cell phone access in Whitefield, which many town residents have said is important to them and it is in that light that we are informing the town of this development. The committee is a non-political body and it takes no position on building the proposed transmission line.

The Members of the Whitefield Economic Development Committee