

Minutes of the Meeting of the Heath MLB
July 20, 2021 at 11 am

Present: MLB: Art Schwenger, Anne Emmet, David Gordon, Bill Fontes, and Ned Wolf
with Jan Carr visiting
MLP Manager, Sheila Litchfield

Art called the meeting to order at 11.

Members read the minutes of the July 13th MLB meeting at 11. Anne moved, and David seconded to approve the minutes. The motion passed unanimously. Members read the minutes of the July 13th WG&E Construction meeting at 2. Anne moved and David seconded to approve the minutes with emendations. The motion passed unanimously.

David said that he has sent the draft of the MLB amendment to the IGA with Charlemont concerning the third Charlemont edge case at 14 Center Heath Road to the Charlemont Broadband Committee who have returned it with 3 proposed changes for clarity. He has sent the document to Robyn and asked who she thinks should sign the document. Should it be the Select Board, the MLB, or both? She is asking town counsel to review it and will present it at the next Select Board meeting.

Bill suggested that following the mention of 'pole licenses' which Heath will receive from Charlemont the words 'for fiber' should be inserted in order that we not be held responsible in the future for phone licenses, etc. on those poles.

David and Bill spoke of having met with David Dvore about changing the access code to the hut and about backup. Bill said that we need to clarify who our contact people are with both WG&E and TriWire. On the door of the hut there will be a laminated sign with contact information for Bill, David, and Sheila who asked that her name be added.

Sheila received during the meeting an email from Jim Drawe asking whether Heath is interested in subscribing to a second MBI circuit. The cost would be \$600 per month per gigabyte which is half the usual price. We would never be using the two circuits simultaneously but would have a backup. Heath could subscribe on a month to month basis.

This type of backup was proposed at a meeting on Wednesday, July 15 hosted by WG&E. MBI and Local Lynx presented their plan to improve resiliency of the fiber service to western Mass towns. David was on the conference call where MBI agreed to pay the up front cost of making a partial solution happen. He said that a town such as Heath, which has a long term contract with MBI, would not need a long term contract for the second MBI circuit.

Art, who was also on the call, expressed concern that although the partial solution would be an improvement for towns on a ring that go down, when a town such as Heath that's on a spur goes down, there might not be any improvement. He said that if the break occurs between our hub and Charlemont, which is on a ring, we still have no backup.

Bill and David spoke of David Dvore's 'real' solution that he proposed in their conversation. Rowe, Charlemont, and Heath would subscribe to Crown Castle's network with the cable carried by high tension line towers above the tree line.

Members suggested that Heath could subscribe to a second MBI line month by month while exploring a second track that could improve resiliency. David moved that we express to Wired West that we're interested in subscribing to a second MBI circuit provided it's not long term. Anne seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. Sheila replied to Jim Drawe's email with a report of the motion that the MLB approved.

There was agreement that the MLB should, as suggested by Bill, maintain communication with David Dvore.

Members turned their attention to Whip City's customer relations. Anne said she knows of Art's having talked with Tim Lively. Robyn had to miss work to accommodate underground work. There have been too many examples of Whip City not being responsive to customer calls. Sheila said that she and Bill spent time going through the CRM and were unable to determine whether or not all work in FSA 2 has been completed. The CRM needs to be cleaned up. It has happened that when customers phone WG&E they are told there's a hold on certain work put on by the town. There are cases where that has not been true. Sheila said that Laura Dorman is talking about cleaning up the CRM.

Jan said that there are now 395 who have signed up. There are 19, however, for whom there is no cost estimate for the drop. This holds up our decision making. Sheila said that the total cost for cold drops is \$18,935. There is no guarantee we'll get any income from cold drops.

Members pointed out how if there were no subsidy for a cold drop, a person could sign up for a hot drop and then cancel. Sheila asked whether we might tighten the drop policy. Anne suggested that by lowering the drop subsidy at a later time we might discourage a person's taking a drop and then canceling.

Invoices

Sheila reported that the Broadband Borrowing Account 39-5-192-002 still has more than \$419,000. in it. She informed members of the following 2 invoices:

HECNST – 10001 -15 a docusign \$508.12

Tri Wire Weeks 36 – 39 \$53,107.85
 all in FSA 4

Ned moved that we approve the 2 above invoices. David seconded the motion which was approved by unanimous vote. Sheila said that we have yet to pay TriWire \$115,353.31.

Sheila said that she can't yet determine whether anyone whose drop cost is greater than \$3000. has been billed. David said he hasn't received a response from Jim Drawe to an email he sent asking what other towns are doing in seeking a customer's commitment to pay. Anne suggested working together on a contract. David said he has sent an email about this matter to Kent Lew of Washington. Kent said that in most cases he has known the customer and has been able to work something out. David will send emails to Bob Gross and Doug McNally asking if they use a contract for payments.

Anne moved to adjourn at 12:52. Bill seconded the motion which passed by unanimous vote.

Respectfully submitted,

Ned Wolf