

Minutes of the Meeting of the Heath MLB  
September 7, 2021 at 11 am

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

Art called the meeting to order at 11:03.

Members read the minutes of the August 31<sup>st</sup> MLB meeting at 11. Bill moved to approve the minutes with corrections. Ned seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Members read the minutes of the WG&E Construction meeting on August 31<sup>st</sup> at 2. Bill moved to approve the minutes with corrections. Ned seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. Members read the minutes of the joint MLB/Select Board meeting on August 31<sup>st</sup> at 5. Anne made a motion to approve the minutes with corrections. Ned seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Sheila reported receiving Hilma's September 3<sup>rd</sup> email with some information about a possible state grant for broadband. Hilma provided Sheila and the ML B with a link to 'Municipal Fiber Grant Program FAQ'. One question is whether or not we can be reimbursed for current construction invoices.

Sheila spoke of WG&E's proposal to provide redundancy to Heath's network as part of a 5 town geo-cluster. The towns besides Heath are Rowe, Charlemont, Colrain, and Leyden. Since the Leyden representative is away, a meeting to explore ways the towns might help each other will be delayed. David in a September 6<sup>th</sup> email has provided nice summaries of 2 backhaul redundancy proposals.

Sheila said that from a recent discussion at a Wired West meeting of hub monitoring she knows that most Wired West towns favors the proposal from Cebula.

David has forwarded to Sheila and the MLB a September 6<sup>th</sup> email 'Hub Monitoring Proposal Status' in which details of Cebula proposal 15540 for hub monitoring at a cost of \$13,378.33 are given. He favors this proposal saying that in recommending it to the Select Board we can tell them that we can afford it within our build budget. Sheila said that if there are maintenance costs, that would come out of broadband income and not from the town's operating budget..

Sheila said that we are one of the few towns with a generator preventive maintenance (PM) plan that was initiated by John Leary and United Concrete and involves the Kinsley Company

who are the authorized Kohler dealers in the area. She recently spoke with Kinsley after learning the PM bills from Kinsley had been sent to United Concrete instead of to Heath.

David will ask Jim Drawe by email about hub monitoring costs.

David moved that the MLB recommends the Select Board enter into a contract with Cebula to install monitoring equipment in the hub according to proposal 15540 for parts and labor. Bill seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. Sheila suggested that we might want Tom Kolek to dial into the meeting where the Select Board considers this matter. This particular Cebula proposal is for equipment only and does not include the actual monitoring.

Bill asked whether we have a key for the electrical panel in the hut.

Sheila said we have not yet received one after requesting it from United Concrete. She will send Patti of United Concrete a follow-up email.

Sheila said that it is important to bring the Select Board on board any redundancy agreement involving an IGA between WG&E and the Heath MLP. She asked whether there's urgency for a temporary solution right away to avoid the possible loss of 911. David recommends that we go with the MBI fix that would not require a contract but would cost \$600. per month with a possible reduction depending on what the 5 towns in Heath's geo-cluster can work out. There will be at least a 6 month wait for the wiring needed between Heath and Charlemont for the 'WG&E Municipal Partners Redundant, Reliable, and Resilient Backhaul Connection'.

Art said that a key is to keep in touch with David Dvore of Rowe. Sheila said that David Dvore proposed to share the cost of the temporary connection with Heath in order to reduce the cost from \$600 to \$300 per month for the MBI short term fix. Bill asked about the capacity if there were such a cost reduction. Bob Handsaker and David Dvore are saying the cost can be reduced by accepting a reduction to one third capacity for 2 or 3 days. David Dvore would prefer to go with Crown Castle.

Members discussed joint MLB/Select Board meetings and joint MLB/Finance Committee meetings going forward with a consensus that having an MLB representative rather than all 5 MLB members present could work well. David said that he is willing to attend the Finance Committee meeting on September 9.

Sheila said that she is working on a 'Heath Herald' article that she will send us. Feedback will have to be sent by Friday morning. She said that the most frequent question people have is "When will I get installed?"

Sheila expressed concern about an email she has received from Betsy Loiko with only 1 installation scheduled in Heath for this week. We will ask about this at the 2 o'clock meeting.

#### Invoice

Sheila reported the following invoice:

TriWire #10      weeks 40 – 44      \$42,724.09

Anne moved that this invoice be approved for payment from the Broadband Borrowing Account. Ned seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

There was a discussion of the invoices that have come in for drop installations. So far the total that has been paid for drop installation invoices is \$159K. The total for all drop installation invoices that have been received is \$211K

Anne moved that from this point any invoice that comes in for drop installations be paid for from the Broadband Drop Subsidy Account. David seconded the motion. The motion passed by unanimous vote.

The committee discussed whether there is a need to advocate for the use of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds. Art said that if we get ARPA money for broadband and there is a surplus, the surplus could be used to help pay back the \$200K transferred out of stabilization. The whole town would benefit, not just those who subscribe to broadband. Sheila thinks we need to make it clear that the ARPA funds are for broadband construction. There was a consensus that the MLB needs to advocate through a letter to the Select Board for the use of ARPA funds for broadband. David volunteered to draft the letter.

David said that he has exchanged emails with the third Charlemont edge case. She will be in Heath tomorrow and will deliver a check then. Anne moved that the MLB authorizes Westfield Gas and Electric and TriWire to proceed with the extension of the network and with the drop installation for the third Charlemont edge case. David seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Anne will check on a customer who has had difficulty receiving the needed service from WG&E. Does a person requesting a cold drop have to be there for an install? WG&E has said yes if it's a trailer.

Art said that he sees nothing on the town website about the broadband subsidy ending September 15<sup>th</sup>. Anne said that one who goes into 'sign-up' sees it. She said she can add it in other places. She also said that it would be nice if there were one site for broadband instead of one for the MLPAC and one for the MLB. Art said that there is a note on the website that certain people who sign up within 90 days will qualify for the Emergency Broadband Benefit, but it doesn't say when the 90 days begins.

Jan said that we've had 4 more people in the past week sign up for broadband.

Anne moved to adjourn at 1:35. Bill seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Ned Wolf