

Minutes of the Meeting of the Heath MLB  
November 16, 2021 at 11

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 11:01.

Members read the minutes of the November 9<sup>th</sup> MLB meeting. Anne moved that the minutes be approved with corrections. Bill seconded the motion. The motion passed.

Members read the minutes of the November 9<sup>th</sup> WG&E installations meeting at 1:30. Anne moved that the minutes be approved with corrections. Bill seconded the motion. The motion passed. Members read the minutes of the November 9<sup>th</sup> WG&E construction meeting at 2:00. Anne moved that the minutes be approved with corrections. Bill seconded the motion. The motion passed.

Sheila said that we need more information about the status of testing in FSA 4 for the permanent residents. Also, we would like to know that the installations in FSA 1 and FSA 2 are complete.

On what date did the Heath-Colrain circuit pass testing? David will look up the date when Sertex was present for testing in the Heath hub. Results of that work would have been sent to WG&E.

Sheila said that new customers since our last meeting include some newcomers to town who are delighted that broadband is available.

Sheila reported on her effort to reach out to the customers scheduled to have their service disconnected on Nov. 18 for lack of payment. She said that half the people have paid. There are now 5 people scheduled to lose their service on that day.

Reaching out in these situations can be awkward and embarrassing. We need to ask, "What does it mean when someone has a delinquent bill?" Art asked whether the customer is confused or is unable to pay? Sheila said that one person thought that automatic payment had been set up. All were using a credit card.

There was a consensus that a phone call should begin with, "We understand that you're about to be disconnected by Whip City Fiber. Are you aware of that?"

Members suggested we check with other towns as to what approach they're taking. Concern was expressed that we not lose a customer who doesn't want to be lost.

Bill asked a question that we will ask WG&E: Is it still possible after a person's internet service has been discontinued to phone 911?

Sheila reported that Lisa Stowe of WG&E will send out an email with the final draft of the redundancy letter which the MLB approved on November 9<sup>th</sup>.

Members reviewed Sheila's summary of broadband finances which she sent to us on November 15<sup>th</sup>. She has sent it to the Finance Committee. The 'summary' tab is just one tab on her spreadsheet. Other tabs are available to explain the source of a particular number.

Art, David, and Bill will attend the WiredWest Board meeting on November 17<sup>th</sup>.

Sheila said that we have received checks from the customer at 14 Center Heath Road and the customers at 612 8A. The checks are payment or partial payment for installations. She hasn't yet talked with the Accountant about where these checks should go. If we put them in the Stabilization Fund Drop Subsidy Account, we might end up spending more than \$200K from that account. If they go into the Broadband Borrowing Account, it may appear that we're exceeding the expected construction cost.

After some discussion it was decided that installation or partial installation payment checks should go into the Stabilization Drop Subsidy Account. There should be two operating accounts for us: one that the Town sets aside for us and one for checks such as those from WiredWest for revenue sharing.

David said that we can track installation invoices by looking for the 'SERV' prefix.

Sheila said that a customer who is a parent with school age children has asked whether the installation schedule gives such families priority. The committee agreed that we should continue to prioritize installations for families with school age children.

Sheila raised the likelihood that the number of Heath's active installs will reach a point where the capacity of our backhaul must be increased. David said that it is recommended to purchase another Gigabit capacity when we reach 300 active installs. That would double the \$1200./month cost of backhaul. Jan said that with the completion of FSA 3 we'll be over 300.

David said that Jim Drawe has built into his spreadsheet the increase in the backhaul cost when a town exceeds 300.

Art announced that he and Tom have changed the time of the November 18<sup>th</sup> joint FinCom and MLB meeting from 6:00 to 6:30. The Zoom link is on the Agenda. He will call Jim Drawe to inform him of the new time.

Bill said that he hasn't heard anything back from WG&E regarding whether or not it is possible with the available equipment for Heath's Muni-Network to have an automatic switch over to the second ONT. David said that Shawn of Northeast IT asked WG&E for 2 IP addresses and 2 ONT's. That's what he got. Now it's between the Town and Northeast IT to work that out. We can alert the Select Board to the possibility that an automatic switch over is not possible with the given equipment. If that is not acceptable to the Select Board, it is their responsibility to go talk with Northeast IT.

Ned asked a question to bring up with WG&E. Have the 3 plug-ins at the hub for the Charlemont edge cases been completed so that those customers are no longer on hold in the CRM?

David said that one of us should follow up with Cebula. What is the status of the installation? Sheila will follow up with Hilma and Cebula.

David said that for the redundancy project a group of representatives from each of the geo-clusters has met weekly with WG&E. Also, representatives of the towns in the Northern Geo-Cluster have met without WG&E. David can provide members with recordings of the meetings. He has sent members 'Update on the RRR Project' (Redundant, Reliable, Resilient) accompanied by Vijay's diagrams of the Current Network and the Full Mesh Solution.

Sheila said that Colrain is considering connecting to Charlemont to improve its redundancy.

Members agreed that not much has changed in the financial report since the September 9<sup>th</sup> except that we have paid more invoices. We need a full year of everyone subscribed before we can start paying back the \$200K and start paying for a depreciation account. The first CAF II payment of \$100K is expected sometime next year based on Becket's being fully operational.

Sheila said that payments to a depreciation fund are operational costs which towns cover in different ways. Some towns have built-in depreciation fees. Once we get a spreadsheet back from Chris we will know how much to pay and can determine how to fund it. David said the

idea is to put aside enough money that 7 years from now we'll have enough for a needed upgrade. Our intention is to be self-sustaining.

### Drop Policy

Members reviewed revisions suggested by Anne, David, and Sheila as they appear in the revised Drop Policy that Sheila emailed to members on November 15<sup>th</sup>. Sheila volunteered to type up additional edits. On the first page under 'Drop Service Installation Credit' Bill questioned whether we will be offering full credit for someone asking for only phone. There was agreement that one of the criteria for receiving a drop credit be 'that the customer subscribe to the internet.'

The changes appearing in the November 15<sup>th</sup> revised Drop Policy include that there be an installation drop credit and that it be lowered from \$3000. to \$250. good through June 30, 2022. Bill moved that we accept the changes above and all changes made by Anne, David, and Sheila as they appear in the revised Drop Policy of November 15 sent by Sheila to the MLB. Anne seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Bill said that while customers can purchase a new router, it's good to keep the old router so it can be temporarily reconnected allowing WG&E to diagnose a service issue.

There was a consensus that cold drops are not eligible for a credit if applied for after September 15<sup>th</sup> 2021.

Sheila will put 'November 16, 2021' at the top of the Drop Policy to make clear which revision this is.

Under 'Interior Installations' David recommended we take out "one time" so that it says "WiredWest will charge a \$99. fee to start a new service account".

Under 'Eligible Premises' on page 1 there was agreement that the bullet for multi-family dwellings should say "Multi-family dwellings can receive a separate drop to each apartment if criteria in the policy section on 'Second Service Drop to the Same E-911 Address' are met.

Art recommended that we ask WG&E later today whether 'custom installations' are available.

Bill moved that pending the answer to the customer installations question we approve the Drop Policy changes above. David seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

David reported that it was on October 11 that Sertex tested the circuit between Colrain and Heath. We need to follow up with WG&E that they have that information.

Ned moved to adjourn at 1:13. Anne seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Ned Wolf