

Minutes of the Meeting of the Heath MLB  
February 15, 2022 at 11  
virtual meeting

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

Art called the meeting to order at 11:01.

Sheila and the MLB focused on the 'important data points for Heath's new network' sent by Bill Ennen to Sheila who sent them to the MLB on February 14<sup>th</sup>.

**Action Taken** *Bill Fontes moved that the 'important data points for Heath's new network' that are in Bill Ennen's email be submitted as part of the application to the State for \$214,466 in aid for constructing the drops. David seconded the motion. The motion passed by unanimous vote.*

Sheila said that there is a possibility that there will be 4 additional drops at the cannabis farms at 11 Bellor Road. Those 4 additional drops would bring the total drops built as a percentage of the total possible drops up to 68.4%. She encourages including those in true-up with the state in the Spring if they are built by then. If Bill Ennen's CFO agrees, we can do reconciliation in the Spring .

Members read the minutes of the February 8<sup>th</sup> MLB meeting with Sheila's edits. Bill moved that the minutes be approved with edits and corrections. David seconded the motion. The motion passed with 4 ayes and 1 abstention. Members read the minutes of the February 8<sup>th</sup> WG&E Installs Meeting. Bill moved that the minutes be approved with corrections. David seconded the motion. The motion passed with 4 ayes and 1 abstention. Members read the minutes of the February 8<sup>th</sup> WG&E Construction Meeting. Bill moved that the minutes be approved. David seconded the motion. The motion passed with 4 ayes and one abstention.

Sheila said that the person at location #817557 is able to pay the \$99 installation fee but is unable to pay the \$407 cost of the installation. This person missed the deadline for the drop subsidy. Sheila has received a letter from the Department of Telecommunications and Cable, stating that the person has been approved for Federal aid in paying broadband . Members said that this person who jointly owns the property with another person could have missed the alert for the deadline if mailings were sent to another address. Members agreed that financial need could be a consideration for waiving the deadline for the full drop subsidy.

**Action Taken** *Bill moved that financial need could be a consideration for waiving the deadline for the \$3000 drop subsidy and that we waive the deadline for the \$3000 drop subsidy for the person with location #817557. David seconded the motion. The motion passed by unanimous vote.*

Sheila reviewed Dave Loiko's inspection sheets for the 4 FSAs. David asked whether ITG will be able to get in to fix what needs to be fixed. Bill said he thinks that they can get in to do some of the needed work. Sheila spoke of the Certificate of Substantial Completion that releases TriWire/ITG from builders risk insurance. She would like to include a block for both Joe Parda as OPM and Heath MLP Manager to sign.

Sheila said that she has received a February 9<sup>th</sup> email from MIIA stating that the 2<sup>nd</sup> invoice will come by the end of February. Once that comes she wants with our permission to sign it right away. She will send the Select Board an email to keep them informed of the situation. There was a consensus among MLB members that Sheila has our permission to sign it right away.

Sheila reported that the Town Accountant has sent an Expense Report dated 2/10/22 that includes 4 of the 5 broadband invoices that were not included in the January 28<sup>th</sup> report. Based on this she has updated the broadband construction budget summary status and sent to the MLB.

A joint MLP budget hearing meeting has been scheduled for February 22 at 7 pm with Select Board and Finance Committee. The meeting needs to be posted. Select Board and Finance Committee members may want to hear how the MLP will contribute to paying back the loan. We do not expect any payback in FY 23 from operating income. We will be prepared to discuss the MLP Statement of Priorities that we sent to the Select Board and the Finance Committee.

On February 15<sup>th</sup> 2 DocuSigns arrived. There was agreement that they should be reviewed before approving and be included in the Broadband Summary report. David said that at some time we will need to adjust the costs for hut security that appear in the summary report. Anne noted that the estimated cost on the summary report for the reliability, resiliency, redundancy project is \$40K. David suggests \$50,000. Sheila agreed to include these edits in the next finance summary update.

Request for Drops from Cannabis Growers

Sheila said that the Planning Board has approved the growing of cannabis by 4 farmers at 11 Bellor Road. All 4 have said they want drops. There may be a 5<sup>th</sup> drop at the house. We need to evaluate the network changes needed to support this before contacting the farms.

Bill has visited the property and seen a house on the left for the caretaker of the property and a building on the right.

Anne said she will check our policy about network extensions.

Anne agreed to check other town websites for their postings regarding commercial accounts. The town website needs an update for the present banner on the home page.

### Tree Trimming

Sheila said that she has a list with input from Dave Loiko and Jeff Johnston of sites needing tree trimming. She will follow up with Jim Drawe on the possibility of cost sharing as MBI and Verizon lines are impacted, as well as cable to Colrain.

David said that Colrain has purchased a bucket truck and is hiring someone to do tree trimming. The person is willing to work in neighboring towns. The line along Taylor Brook Road is in Colrain's interest as well as Heath's. Bill said that if Colrain were to work in Heath, there could be insurance issues.

Sheila said that she has not heard people in any town say that MBI cooperates with tree trimming. David said that we should add that to our list of MBI's short comings.

### Wired West Board Meeting

Sheila said she will attend the Wired West Board meeting this Wednesday the 16<sup>th</sup>. Art and David may attend. The Board will be voting on a warrant that includes \$14,918.63 in invoices for the Heath MLP that are listed in an email attachment from Sheila to MLB members on February 15<sup>th</sup>. Some invoices are Heath specific and come out of our net revenue; others are shared costs.

### Redundancy Project

David said while he initially favored the town's getting a dual controller, he may want to rethink the costs. He detailed the costs in an email report sent to the MLB on February 14<sup>th</sup> (See Appendix). The dual controller would cost \$17,868 more than the least expensive option.

Maintenance for the dual controller would be about \$6K /yr. Heath can have a dual controller even if the other towns do not. Information is still being gathered with an eye on March 15 when an application for a Community Compact Cabinet Grant becomes available.

We encouraged people to subscribe to Ooma phone service. David said we have responsibility to consider ways of making that service as reliable as possible. We will have to decide in a couple of weeks on what model Nokia controller we want.

David said that Cebula is planning to be in Heath on February 21<sup>st</sup> to install the card access security system in the hut. Cebula has sent to Northeast IT the network required specifications, and Shawn Weaver has responded. David will be there to greet Cebula and provide the access code to the hut.

Anne moved that the meeting be adjourned at 12:33. Bill seconded the motion. The motion passed by unanimous vote.

Respectfully submitted,

Ned Wolf

## Appendix

Sent to MLB on February 14, 2022

**David Gordon** (djgordon@gmail.com) To: you + 4 more [Details](#)

On Thursday 2/10/22, WGE provided the Northern Ring towns with some answers to questions regarding various 7250 switch options.

- Dual controllers can be hot-swapped. That is, if one fails, the other can be replaced without interrupting service. Also, they can be configured so that the network operator is notified if one fails.
- WGE has not provided a firm quote on annual maintenance for each model, but they estimated that the "Gold" option (24/7) is annually about 15% of the purchase price.

This annual maintenance cost is a concern to me.

I was inclined to go with the dual controllers because, at initial glance, I thought it would add about \$10,000 to the cost. I've since looked more carefully at scenarios which use the 7250 IXR-R4 with dual controllers. The equipment cost difference compared to the least expensive option is actually \$17,868. If we figure an equipment life of 10 years, that's adding about \$1,786 per year for equipment cost. For Heath that's adding about \$4.47 per customer per year for the benefit of dual controllers.

The annual maintenance cost is tough. At 15% of equipment purchase price the dual controller maintenance is about \$6,000 / year vs. \$3,500 / year for the least expensive model. That's about \$15 per customer per year versus \$8.75 / customer per year. I've asked WGE for actual quotes for maintenance options, including those that are not the "Gold" option.

In grant news, Leyden, Rowe, Colrain and Charlemont are interested in jointly applying for a Community Compact Municipal Fiber Grant, and Colrain has offered to be the lead community. Jack Golden of Leyden has contacted the state grant administrator, and he is quite encouraging. He notes:

- 1- Redundancy fits perfectly in the grant criteria
- 2- Municipal assets are the primary focus
- 3- Our fiber huts count as municipal assets
- 4- Establishing redundant connection to municipal assets (town buildings) is key
- 5- That the community at large will benefit is a secondary result
- 6- this is an investment in municipal assets and towns' infrastructure

In addition, as a group we could ask for up to \$500,000 with a 5% match (in kind services count). They believe we should be notified about mid June, though, being a new grant, it might take longer.

Looking forward to discussing in the MLB meeting.

David