

Minutes of the Meeting of the Heath MLB with the Select Board and the Finance Committee
February 22, 2022 at 7
virtual meeting

Present: Select Board: Robyn Provost-Carlson(Chair), Sue Lively, and Brian DeVriese
with Town Coordinator Hilma Sumner

Finance Committee: Tom Lively(Chair), Ned Wolf, Alice Wozniak, and
Bob McGahan

MLB: Art Schwenger (Chair), David Gordon, Bill Fontes, and Ned Wolf,
with MLP Manager Sheila Litchfield

Robyn introduced Art who called the MLB meeting to order at 7:01.

He asked whether there were any questions about the draft of the FY 23 MLP Budget that she had sent to the committees by email on February 21. Tom requested that Art go over the Budget which he did. He said that the annual Wired West assessment of \$1000. will be eliminated with a change of the bylaws that is in progress. The MLP Manager's salary line is level funded even though as many hours after June may not be needed. The broadband subscription costs for the buildings in the Municipal Network will be absorbed by the MLP. The FY 23 Budget is \$6K less than was the FY 22 Budget. Art introduced MLP Manager Sheila Litchfield.

Sheila said that in an email Bill Ennen, the Last Mile Liaison for the Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development, he says that his CFO has approved the amending of Heath's state contract to include the town's receiving \$214,682 as a subsidy for the construction of Broadband drops. His CFO has approved the town's reconciling in the Spring when we are hoping for more subscribers.

Sheila said that Hilma and she received a letter from MIIA with an invoice for \$576 after being told the amount would be about \$1800. Payment of this bill will mean insurance coverage until July of 2022 for the network, the hut, the generator, the HVAC, and the electronic components in the hut. Future invoices go to Wired West.

Hut Security

Sheila said that on February 22nd a \$13K security system was installed by Cebula at the hut. Art and Sheila have both signed a contract to provide continuous hut monitoring for \$400 /yr and a once a year on-site inspection and test for \$200.

In addition Sheila said that by joining with 10 other towns at a cost of \$481.35 per town with an annual support fee of \$46.09 Heath can have a card access administration system. The cost could be reduced if more towns sign up. The access cards cost \$5.70 each.

Action Taken *The Heath Select Board approved by unanimous vote Heath's joining 10 other towns and paying the above costs to have card access administration at the hut.*

Art thanked Sheila and introduced Bill Fontes.

Construction Status

Bill said that the construction is pretty much complete. There are 23 active customers in FSA 4 and 68 who have filled out an application. FSAs 1, 2, and 3 have 14 applications. There are 12 cold drops in FSAs 1, 2, and 3 and 10 in FSA 4.

Art thanked Bill and introduced David Gordon.

Redundancy, Resiliency, and Reliability

David spoke of the 5 Northern Tier towns of Rowe, Charlemont, Colrain, Leyden, and Heath agreeing on a contract to share the costs of a redundancy project. Heath has an opportunity to join with the other towns in applying for a state grant that would help in funding the project.

Action Taken *The Heath Select Board approved by unanimous vote that Heath join with the other Northern Tier towns in applying for a grant from the state to improve the redundancy of the Heath Broadband Network.*

There is a contract to share the costs among the 5 towns of the redundancy project. Other towns have agreed to share the cost of having that contract reviewed by KP Law. David noted

that backhaul is an operating cost, and said that the MLP would cover Heath's share of the cost of having the contract reviewed by KP Law.

Action Taken *The Heath Select Board approved by unanimous vote a motion to share with the other Northern Tier towns the cost of having KP Law review the contract to share the cost of the redundancy project with the other Northern Tier towns.*

Art thanked David.

Broadband Loan Repayment

Robyn asked about the payment plan for the Broadband loan. Ned spoke of the Statement of MLP Priorities that was sent to members of the Select Board and the Finance Committee. He said that although the MLB is mindful of the Town's need to make the loan payments, it is too early to say whether broadband income will be available to help with those payments. For FY 23 we are not expecting any broadband income to be available to help with the loan payments. In fact among the 5 priorities listed, contributing to the town's payment obligations for repayment of Broadband loans is #5.

Tom asked about the first paragraph of the MLP priorities statement. The MLB took time to read the paragraph stating the prime importance of using revenue from subscriptions to cover operating expenses and necessary maintenance and repairs.

Ned spoke of having discussed at 6:15 with the Finance Committee and the Select Board a 15 year and an 18 year repayment schedule prepared by Brianne Susel, Assistant Vice President of UniBank.

Art said that the MLB watches closely for and investigates any possibility of state or federal assistance in the repayment of its Broadband loan. In FY 24 there could be assistance from CAF II funds.

Office Space

Art restated the need of the MLP Manager and the MLB to have office space in the town but not in a private house. Space in Sawyer Hall could fulfill that need. The Select Board said they haven't decided yet, but some MLB office space in Sawyer Hall might be possible.

Bill moved that the MLB meeting be adjourned at 7:56. David seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Ned Wolf