Minutes of the Heath MLB Meeting

December 6, 2022 at 11

Virtual meeting

Present: Art Schwenger (Chair), Anne Emmet, David Gordon, Bill Fontes, and Ned Wolf

 with MLP Manager Sheila Litchfield

Art called the meeting to order at 11:01.

Members read the minutes of the December 6th MLB meeting. Anne moved that the minutes be approved with corrections. David seconded the motion. The motion passed with 4 ayes, and Bill, who wasn’t present, an ‘abstain’.

Report of the MLB Manager

Sheila said that there’s been no reply from Joe Parda. We don’t know whether or not he recommends changing the date on the ITG warranty, backed up by BTR, from January 1, 2022 to the date in March when the project was actually finished. Sheila said she will continue seeking answers.

Sheila’s request that Jamrog review their proposal to Heath for the hut’s HVAC maintenance awaits a reply. We are also seeking an explanation of why Asplundh did not do any tree trimming in Heath.

Sheila has accounted in the cash flow projection for the last 3 payments.

She and the MLB expressed interest in bringing Heath’s payments into the Depreciation Reserve up to date as of the close of FY22.

**Action Taken** *David moved to transfer $37,626 to a Depreciation Reserve account to bring*

 *our Depreciation Reserve payments up to date as of the close of FY 22 in*

 *accordance with MLB fiscal priority #2. Bill seconded the motion. The motion*

 *passed by unanimous vote.*

David noted that the $37,626 not only catches up FY 22 for which the payment is $35K but also FY 21 for which a payment of $2,626 is needed. The payments in succeeding years will be $35K with additional amounts when new equipment is added to the network.

Sheila spoke of MBI’s Digital Equity Partnership Program which seeks organizations to implement 6 initiatives across the state one of them being education on the use of technology.

The funding for this program is $350 million. Members wondered whether the financial support for broadband subscribers through ACP could increase to 100%.

Bill suggested that there might be funding for the purchase of routers.

Members complimented Sheila for contacting Hilma about the program. Art suggested sending a note to Linda Dunlavy saying that we’re interested, we’re watching, and we hope she’ll support our needs. We could copy Carolyn Kirk, chair of MBI.

Date of Next Wired West Board Meeting: Wednesday, December 21st.

Backhaul

David provided the following report of the November 30th meeting of the Northern Tier towns:

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

I zoomed with Rowe, Charlemont, Colrain, Leyden and Jim Drawe last night (11/29).

Rowe, Colrain and Leyden are in favor of the three backhaul provider option. (Crown Castle Point of Presence (POP) in Rowe, Verizon POP in Charlemont and MBI POP in Leyden.) I said that Heath would be agreeable to the three provider option. Charlemont has reservations because they budgeted for only two backhaul providers, so the third provider adds about a $7,000 annual cost. But maybe Charlemont would be willing to pay for 2 Gb of the MBI option.

I suggested that we run some numbers with different scenarios, including Charlemont only sharing the cost (and bandwidth) of two providers.

There are unknowns that we need to resolve. These include:

1. When will we have firm quotes from MBI.
2. What is the status of the High Level Design document that the towns were supposed to get from WCF to approve?
3. What does WCF need from the towns in order to proceed with Low Level Design, and when do they need it.

I sent an email to John Leary on behalf of the group to ask about #2 and #3, above.

David said that they won’t know what the MBI shared contract will be until January at the earliest. They wonder how this will affect the backhaul timeline.

He said that the equipment for the project has arrived and is being tested in Westfield. The Crown Castle route is ready and waiting in Rowe.

Financing the Payment of the Loan

Ned talked with Bob Handsaker about the possibility of a Commonwealth Bank that would help towns like Heath and Charlemont to pay off the broadband debt. An aide to Adam Hinds, who may become an aide to Paul Mark is interested in a Commonwealth Bank. Ned said that we could do 7 more years of one year notes with Unibank. But we should look around for other options. The alternatives he’s heard of are available to towns with a history of more frequent audits than Heath has had.

Website

Anne has talked with Hilma and with Pat. Pat will talk with the person at Montague Webworks who runs the website and see if he can recover the lost files. There was a consensus that items unique to Heath should be on Heath’s broadband page. The box with “Are you looking for info on …?” should be removed until we decide what things are unique to Heath.

Art said we should have something as soon as possible to find guidance on the website. Anne will look into making it more obvious.

Sheila suggested we learn what resources WCF has for us in operations and maybe have links to them. Pat will look into the dead end links that Anne has identified to her.

Art mentioned the need to revise the Drop Policy. Sheila said that she can do that and send it out for review.

For the meeting at 1:30

Sheila emailed to Chris, Betsy, and Brian the following items for discussion:

1. We'd like to get the Heath info on the WCF website updated. How best to work with you on this?
2. a reminder that the POD is still at Jacobs Road.
3. Progress on installations? Any impact from sending the letter to inform residents the stipend is only applicable if installed by June 30, 2023? Can we get an updated version of Betsy's "uninstalled" list?

Bill moved that the meeting be adjourned at 12:38. Anne seconded the motion. The motion passed by unanimous vote.

 Respectfully submitted, Ned Wolf