

Minutes of the Heath MLB Meeting
July 9, 2024 at 11
Virtual meeting

Present: MLB: Art Schwenger (Chair), David Gordon, Bill Fontes, Ned Wolf,
MLP Manager Sheila Litchfield, and Anne Emmet at 11:30

Art called the meeting to order at 11.

Members read the minutes of the MLB Meeting on June 18th. Bill moved that the minutes be approved with edits. David seconded the motion. The motion passed by unanimous vote.

MLP Manager's Report

Sheila has received confirmation from Whip City Fiber (WCF) that they will send a check for \$2,702.40 for the unused fiber they removed from the pad at 18 Jacobs Road. WCF has said that they will say when the check is coming. It was recommended that we alert the treasurer when the check is coming.

A potential customer at 26 State Farm Road is building a new house and has asked whether any subsidy is available for an installation with a drop estimated to cost \$3,800. WCF has not yet replied about the accuracy of that estimate. Bill volunteered after the meeting to drive to the site and check it out.

Sheila said that WCF has replied to the FCC complaint with a letter signed by Tom Flaherty, General Manager. He writes that only Heath has the power to waive the \$1,100 installation fee for the potential customer. Sheila replied to WCF that the \$1,100 installation fee is the standard Fee set by WCF and the only assistance Heath MLP could offer would be a subsidy. Tom Flaherty later agreed.

MBI Email about Equity

Sheila informed the MLB that the Massachusetts Broadband, Equity, Access, and Development Program (BEAD Program) does apply to Heath after all, and that there is work to be done by July 20th. The BEAD Challenge Process (June 20 – July 20) has only to do with access, not affordability. The MBI map for the Town of Heath indicates that there are 66 unserved locations. Sheila has reviewed each of these and finds that most are either already served by

Heath fiber or are outbuildings or bad addresses. MBI wants us to correct their map, but the mistakes are so numerous that the July 20th deadline does not allow sufficient time.

Each potential customer would have to fill out a challenge. We have asked MBI to accept other forms of proof of service than a speed test, but so far they have not.

With \$147 million of federal money allotted to Massachusetts for this Challenge Process there is the possibility that money could be available to assist with installations that exceed the standard installation fee.

Accounting

On July 1st Heath moved to the Vadar accounting software.

Spring Rideout

Sheila said that Dave Loiko of WCF has submitted his report with photos. WCF has yet to send a bill. Of all the Wired West towns, Heath has the fewest problems. There are 6 or 7 broken strands or lashings. Dave recommends a rideout every spring.

Both the rideout and repairs will be shared Wired West costs.

Generator Maintenance

Sheila said that on July 5th there was a warning notice from the generator. She contacted Kinsley and submitted a request for service. On July 9th the generator test was successful. The generator is back on standby.

David asked whether anyone is changing filters in the air handling unit. Sheila said that we've tried without success to have an HVAC company come. The most recent company she has written to is Pomeroy. Bill volunteered to go behind the hut and check out where the air filter is and whether it can be changed easily.

Network Insurance

Sheila said that Wired West is exploring network insurance options and whether the town MLP's are insured sufficiently. What are we insured for? All the Wired West towns are insured through MIIA/ Hanover. Prior to our network being operational Sheila has filled out forms requested by MIIA insurance. David volunteered to take on the assessing of what we have. He said that the origin of the insurance question raised by WiredWest meetings is "How much is needed for an appropriate sized reserve to be held by WiredWest?"

Should Heath MLP offer toward installations?

Sheila has sent an email to a potential customer with whom we discussed the cost of the installation.

Heath, which once offered a subsidy, no longer does. It is the only Wired West town not offering a subsidy. The other towns' subsidies are as follows:

Beckett \$750

New Salem \$300

Rowe 100%

Washington \$625

Windsor \$300

Members think that we should consider the Town's obligation to repay the \$1.45 million loan. At the same time we want to get broadband to as many customers as we can. We need answers to questions such as "How many existing drops are not active?" and "How many have taken service without a subsidy?" David will see what can be determined from the CRM.

CAF II Funds Received

In an email of June 20th Sheila reported that treasurer Kris Nartowicz has confirmed Heath's receipt on June 17 of \$169,257.76 for the 2024 CAF II funds. The Special Revenue Account #'s for the CAF II funds are Revenue = 28 – 4 – 650 001

Expenses = 28 – 5 – 650 – 001

The email was forwarded to the Finance Committee.

Other Updates

Sheila said that Brian Sullivan of WCF is retiring. Caitrin Ferriter is going on maternity leave.

At the fairgrounds Bill has brought an internet wire into the room where the money is counted.

Date of Next MLB Meeting: virtual on Tuesday, August 27th at 11 AM

Bill moved that the meeting be adjourned at 12:42. David seconded the motion. The motion passed by unanimous vote.

Respectfully submitted, Ned Wolf

