

Town of Heath

Meeting minutes

Heath Municipal Light Plant Advisory Committee

Date/time: 8/27/19 at 9:30 am

Location: Assessors' Office, Sawyer Hall

Called to order at 9:34 am by Art Schwenger with Sheila Litchfield and Ned Wolf present

Agenda was reviewed.

Sheila said that she and Bob Bourke had been present at the Mohawk Estates (ME) Board meeting on August 25th. Unanimous dislike was expressed for DSL and strong interest in Broadband. Jenny (Mohawk Estates President) estimates that there are about 100 DSL subscribers at ME. We need to explore how to ensure voice over IP is compatible with E911 before we can recommend VOIP.

At 10:00 am a conference call began with WG&E including Rick, Joe, Sheila, Art, and Ned.

Sheila asked Rick whether WG&E was aware of the "critical risk" of contracting EEE virus in Heath and Colrain as announced by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health recently. Rick asked for more information which Sheila provided. She advised that workers in Heath spray themselves with insect repellent containing DEET. Rick said he would pass the information on to Andy Sullivan of National Grid and Dave of Verizon.

Sheila asked about the status of the contract for construction. Rick said that they're waiting for Chris. Receiving a bill of material is preliminary to getting a contract bid docu-sign email.

Sheila said that she had heard that the company Sertex was underbid and asked whether that was the case. Rick said that Sertex had been doing WG&E's drop installations. Then WG&E sought bids for more extensive and comprehensive work to begin in mid-September and to include installing wires in Rowe and possibly Heath. TriWire of Chicopee, a much larger company than Sertex, won the bid.

Sheila told Rick that Heath has been sent by WG&E an ISP contract which we are reviewing and will be making a recommendation to the MLP.

Next, Sheila informed Rick of 2 sites in Heath where new homes will be built and additional wire will be needed: one at the intersection of Hosmer Rd. and Colrain Stage Rd. and the other beside 91 Route 8A. Rick said it's not too late to include those sites in the plan provided they receive the street address and pole number.

Sheila spoke of meeting with the Mohawk Estates Board on Sunday August 25th. She said there was some discussion of the many seasonal people and whether or not those people might pay the higher rate for 1 gigabyte (= 1000 Mbps) service while they're in Heath and then a lower rate for 25 Mbps while they're away. Rick said to switch a subscriber's speed is not technically difficult and is something WG&E could explore.

He noted that the lower speed (25 Mbps) is being offered by Wired West and not WG&E, but that WG&E might be able to mimic the lower speed of 25 Mbps. Rick and MLPAC members discussed the need for a seasonal policy for the whole town and not simply for ME. Sheila, Art, and Ned saw the need for scheduling another meeting on seasonal policy.

Sheila and Art raised concerns about VOIP's compatibility with emergency calls. Rick acknowledged that VOIP doesn't play well with certain medical monitoring devices and security systems. He added, however, that in each of these situations a fix has been found. To be prepared for a power loss Rick said people should buy a UPS and hook up a battery pack or to make certain that VOIP and the router are on one's generator power list. WG&E will work with each customer on a case by case basis to ensure the system works for each.

Art asked Rick about lifeline required by CAF II; Rick said that lifeline is income eligibility based and; eligible households can apply to receive \$9.25 toward their broadband service bill. The actual path the CAF II money takes is complicated, but eventually when various regulations have been met the money is released from WG&E to the Town MLP account, which is the same that holds all payments from customers.

Members discussed the pros and cons of going with WiredWest, and agreed to discuss when all committee members are present.

The MLPAC will send the Select Board/MLP Board recommendation to consult with MLP Advisory Committee on any Broadband related expense, and also to express our concerns regarding ease of use of the town website.

Ned will talk with David Dvore about the accounting system options during operations.

Art will draft a recommendation for the committee to discuss on joining WW.

The meeting adjourned at 11:29 am.

Next meeting is September 10th at 9:30.

Respectfully submitted, Ned Wolf