

Minutes of the Heath MLPAC Meeting
April 6, 2021 at 11 am

Present: MLPAC: Art Schwenger, Jan Carr, Anne Emmet, Paul Dabrody, and Ned Wolf with Bill Fontes and Dave Gordon as visitors
MLP Manager, Sheila Litchfield

Art called the meeting to order at 11:06. Members read the minutes of the March 30th MLPAC meeting at 11. Anne made a motion that the minutes be approved. Jan seconded the motion. The motion passed. Members read the minutes of the March 30th MLPAC meeting at 2. Anne made a motion to approve the minutes. Jan seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Art reported that Jim Drawe says that the policy discussion at Wired West on connecting/disconnecting continues. Sheila said she thought it was a matter of getting rid of the current policy. Art said, yes, but that they're trying to put limitations on the new policy. Sheila said that if we learn by the 15th what the new policy is, we'll be OK for getting the news to the Mohawk Estates newsletter by the 17th. Art said that the Wired West Board meeting where the new policy would be approved would not happen until the following Wednesday. Still, we may have an inkling of the decision in time to put something in the newsletter. Once we know the details of the new policy, we can edit our Drop Policy and get that approved by the MLB.

The coming 2 meetings of the MLB are on April 15th and April 29th.

Jan said that she, Sheila and Caitrin Ferriter of WG&E reviewed the CRM checking vacant sites, already signed up, and eligibility for a drop. Caitrin said that she would send along information Sheila and Jan had sent in hopes that it can be merged with the PDU they're using.

We now have 362 signups. Bill asked out of how many? Sheila said we've used 516, and hopefully, WG&E can firm it up. Dave asked whether it's a problem to have too many potential drops in getting reimbursed. Members said that would not be a problem. A town gets reimbursed up to 70% of the number of potential drops. Any drops that aren't done we don't pay for. If there are funds left over for drops, we use them for cold drops.

There was a discussion of the appeal that that tv service could have for people thinking of signing up. Sheila said that on our website she's uploaded a flyer on streaming. Dave asked whether Wired West could promote a particular tv option out of the many available. Having one recommended might make choosing broadband less daunting.

Sheila reported that Bill Ennen has worked on an amendment to the IGA intended to speed up the installation of drops in the towns where a broadband network is being built. The amendment says that the state will reimburse for what WG&E does for undergrounds. The amendment has to go to the Select Board for their signatures.

Sheila reported that Charlemont and their board haven't decided yet on whether they'll do the third house on Bassett Road.

The quarterly report is due on April 15th.

John Leary has confirmed that WG&E has signed up for the Emergency Broadband Benefit.

Sheila said that she has received from Local Links, which has taken the place of Axia, an invoice for work on Taylor Brook Road. She will hold onto this invoice because she doesn't think it's ours to pay.

Members began a discussion of a transition plan from the MLPAC to the MLB. Art called members' attention to an attachment to an April 4th email which is titled 'The Responsibilities and Purview of the Municipal Light Board' and was created by the MLPAC last July. He also noted an attachment to his March 30th email to the MLPAC entitled 'Draft of the MLPAC to MLB Transition Plan'.

Dave suggested additions to the MLB's list of responsibilities. They come from a document of the Wired West website:

- Reviews financial reports from the MLP Manager, and
- Decides when and how depreciation funds should be appropriated.

The MLB would review and submit the Last Mile Contingency Fund (LMCF) required report. The preparing of the reports has been done by the Manager. Hilma has been submitting them.

The MLB attends the weekly construction meeting with WG&E and TriWire.

The MLB attends the monthly meeting with Bill Ennen.

The MLB need not all attend the Wired West Board meetings.

The Wired West Liaison could be the MLP Manager or an alternate. The MLP Manager represents Heath on the Wired West Board. Sheila said that every town has done something slightly different. In some towns the Select Board has wanted to be involved.

The MLP Manager puts together the ATM written report, and the MLB approves it. The Manager and the MLB together talk at the ATM.

Marketing is the responsibility of the MLP Manager and the MLB.

The MLP Manager is involved in the interface with customers, but the MLB could be brought in. In the interface with neighboring towns such as occurs with IGA's both the MLP Manager and the MLB are active.

For Manager Reports it's the MLP Manger that creates them, and the MLB approves.

Dave suggested that symbols such as 'A' and 'B' be used to designate who has the primary and who has the backup responsibility.

The MLP Manager, who receives and responds to mail, is the 'gatekeeper'.

Anne noted that in Art's transition plan after the election some of the tasks slide over from the MLPAC to the Manager. Sheila said it's up to us to describe the Manager's role going forward. Our group has decided that the MLPAC is involved in approving invoices. It may be that at some point that the Manager does that and the MLB is not involved. There was a consensus that until the system is fully operational we'll continue with our present invoice system.

For the broadband email address the MLP Manager is the gatekeeper. There should be consistent messaging from the MLB although more than one person could contribute to the 'Herald'. The MLB will serve as emissaries and get feedback for public questions and comments.

The trouble shooting of billing errors starts with the Manager who would have access to the needed information.

The Manager updates the webpage.

The posting of MLB minutes on the website is handled by the MLB which will have a chair and a secretary.

There are 'milestones' that Bill Ennen requires for applications for funding. These will continue to be the responsibility of the Manager. The LMCF quarterly reports are also handled by the Manager. The Manager maintains records. The Manager serves as an interface with the Town and the Treasurer. When it comes to interacting about the eligibility for drops, it's the MLPAC that has done this.

Anne observed that Art's 3 stages, between now and the May election, from the election to the end of construction, and after the construction do not by themselves activate things.

Sheila asked whether in the development of policy the primary responsibility is with the MLB or the Manager. Art said that the approval of policy is by the MLB.

Jan suggested there be a liaison with WG&E for CAFII and any additional federal funding.

Art said that the discussion of the transition to the MLB will come up again in the April 13th MLPAC meeting.

Anne made a motion to recess the meeting until 2 o'clock. Ned seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted, Ned Wolf

