



## MUNICIPAL LIGHT PLANT WARRANT ARTICLE INFORMATION

### What are we voting for?

We're voting for our town to form a Municipal Lighting Plant (MLP) department, under Massachusetts General Laws 164. If passed with a two-thirds majority vote of voters present, at two town meetings, two to 13 months apart, this allows our town to join the WiredWest Cooperative, which will undertake the capitalization, buildout and operation of a municipal fiber-optic network in participating Municipal Light Plant towns.

### What are the Town's roles and responsibilities?

The Selectboard can choose to oversee its MLP department themselves or appoint a three to five member board. This group is responsible for appointing a manager, making decisions around the town's participation and representation in the WiredWest Cooperative (WWC), and filing annually with the State.

Creating the MLP incurs no cost to the town. If a town joins the WWC, there will be a membership fee of not more than \$1,000 per town. Participation in the WWC is voluntary, but a town's decision to leave the WWC after the point of project financing will be determined by the type and terms of the financing.

### Why do we need this initiative?

Passing the MLP legislation is the first critical step to getting every business, student, institution and citizen connected to the 21st century digital world and ensuring we have access to the same advantages our urban and suburban counterparts enjoy.

Today, our region's lack of universal broadband disadvantages us with higher costs, lower productivity and fewer opportunities. Businesses and students cannot compete on a level playing field, and healthcare providers, schools, local governments, public safety agencies and the citizens they serve, cannot reap the cost savings and improved service delivery enabled by a robust, high-bandwidth fiber-optic network.

Without an effort now to bring our region's telecommunications infrastructure into the 21st century, this digital divide will continue to grow, and our region's appeal for businesses, young people, families and working professionals will diminish. The WiredWest plan to build and operate a municipal fiber network is critical to creating much needed economic stability and growth, sustaining our communities, and protecting the quality of life so many of us treasure in Western Massachusetts.

### Warrant Article:

To see if the Town will vote to authorize the Board of Selectmen to take all necessary and appropriate action to establish and to maintain, in accordance with the provisions of Chapter 164 of the General Laws and in accordance with the rules, regulations and orders of the Department of Public Utilities and the Department of Telecommunications & Cable, a municipal lighting plant for all purposes allowable under the laws of the Commonwealth, including without limitation the operation of a telecommunications system and any related services, or to take any other action relative thereto.

**WiredWest** is a community-driven initiative to build a municipal, last-mile, fiber-optic network in Western Massachusetts towns unserved and underserved by high-speed internet, and create a long-lived asset that drives regional economic growth and quality of life for years to come.



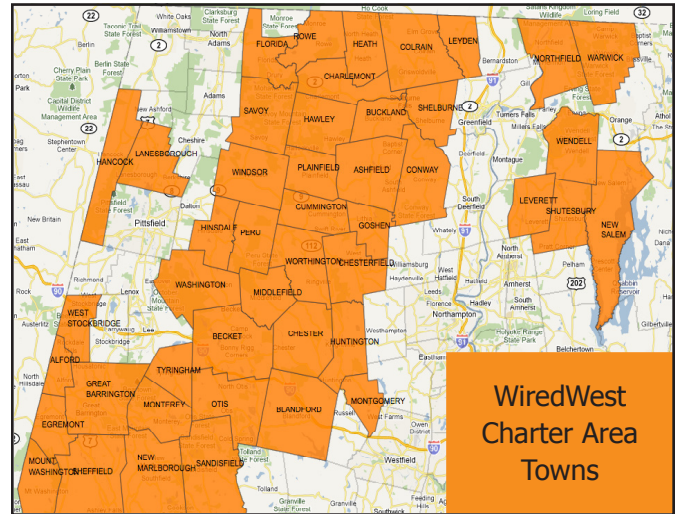
## Background

The WiredWest initiative is the result of broadband advocates throughout Western Massachusetts coming together to solve the problem of inadequate access and ensure the solution serves the needs of our communities.

WiredWest consists of 47 Charter towns in Western Massachusetts that are unserved or underserved by broadband. The towns formally joined organizational discussions following votes at 2010 annual town meetings or Selectboard action.

The Municipal Light Plant (MLP) recommendation is a result of extensive research guided by local municipal counsel, project counsel and a national community broadband consultant. The MLP option was advantageous to our efforts for a number of reasons, particularly the expediency of using existing legislation.

In addition to governance work, WiredWest and its consultants have compiled a business plan with projected financial statements; maintained relationships with key stakeholders including towns, legislators, local businesses, schools, citizens, the Massachusetts Broadband Institute, and regional planning and economic development agencies, and other organizational activities. For more information, please visit [www.wiredwest.net](http://www.wiredwest.net).



## WiredWest Network Principles

**Universal Access:** We believe every home and business deserves access to 21st century telecommunications and will work to make service available to all who want it.

**Community-Owned:** Participating towns have a role in oversight of the organization, to ensure the network is managed in the best interests of our communities and the region.

**Financially Sustainable:** The business model must be sustainable and realistic in its assumptions; built on the premise that revenues will cover operational costs, debt service and repayment of capital investment within a reasonable timeframe.

**Focus on Service and Affordability:** The focus will be enabling the provision of comprehensive, high quality services, with secure, reliable connections, and at affordable rates.

**Future-proof:** Building a high capacity network for our region is essential – but the upfront costs are high. Thus, the network must last a long time and be capable of highly scalable, economic upgrades as needs increase.

## Why a municipal fiber network?

A municipal model is being proposed because our region doesn't offer enough profitability for the private sector. Using a municipal model allows capital to be borrowed at lower rates and paid back over a longer period.

A fiber-optic network provides superior performance over any other technology and is able to accommodate escalating bandwidth needs of modern applications like video streaming and file sharing. Fiber delivers phone, internet, television - and innovative ancillary services like telemedicine and home security – all over a single line.

## How does WiredWest fit with the State's middle mile?

WiredWest is working closely with the Massachusetts Broadband Institute (MBI) to ensure the creation of a robust, high performance network in WiredWest towns, from end to end.

The MBI is building a middle mile network that brings fiber to an end point in each town. WiredWest is proposing a last mile network that extends the fiber from the MBI's end point out to homes and businesses in our towns. This makes reliable, high-performance, fiber-optic service available to all who want it.

## What's Next?

All towns that have established MLPs by June 30, 2011 will be invited as founding members of the WiredWest Communications Cooperative. Representatives from these towns will make up the Board of Directors of the Coop, will approve the articles of incorporation and will begin forming bylaws. Once the Coop is formed, the process of procuring financing will also begin, which is the first step in building the network.