

ALL TOWNS RATIFY WIREDWEST WARRANT ARTICLE AND CONVENE FOR FIRST MEETING

Citizens from 45 towns across Western Massachusetts, that are unserved and underserved by broadband, have voted to join discussions around the formation of WiredWest, a community-owned, fiber-to-the-home network in the region – and two additional towns have joined by Select Board action. Following the last town vote, representatives from the participating towns met in Cummington to review work completed so far, and discuss next steps.

Ashfield, MA (WiredWest), June 27, 2010 – All towns have now passed the WiredWest article on their town warrants, and two additional town Selectboards – Egremont and Lanesborough – have also opted to join the discussions on the formation of the WiredWest organization. The total is now 47 towns, which officially convened on June 26th for the inaugural all-town meeting in Cummington.

The first order of business for WiredWest is to determine the best governance and business ownership structure, so that a legal entity can be approved by the towns. The research on governance options is being conducted by Dr. Andrew Cohill, a community broadband network consultant that has been provided through funding from the Massachusetts Broadband Institute (MBI), in concert with a municipal lawyer provided through grants from Berkshire Regional Planning Commission and Franklin County Council of Governments.

Dr. Cohill is a broadband architect with an international reputation for his work advising large and small communities on technology and broadband issues. He and his firm, Design Nine, have worked with communities across the country, from their main office in Blacksburg, Virginia, and satellite offices in Santa Fe, New Mexico; Raleigh, North Carolina; and Pittsfield, MA.

Dr. Cohill and his firm are also addressing other organizational matters with WiredWest representatives, the MBI, and key regional stakeholders, including: target area demographic analysis; needs assessment and market surveys; business model assessment and development of a business plan that includes timing and staging of a full network build out; and identifying funding strategies for financing the network. It is expected this work will be completed by late fall of 2010, and will provide WiredWest with the necessary information to solicit financing for the project.

About WiredWest:

WiredWest is a community organization with the mission of designing, building and operating an open-access, community-owned, fiber-optic network in member towns that offers comprehensive, affordable and reliable internet, phone and television services to all residents, businesses and institutions who want service. More information is available at www.wiredwest.net

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