**WiredWest Applauds Baker-Polito Administration**

**For Support of Broadband in Western Massachusetts**

WiredWest, the municipal cooperative working to bring broadband service to homes and businesses in western Massachusetts, responded enthusiastically to the press release issued today by the Baker-Polito Administration (see below) announcing its support for expanding high-speed internet service in areas in western Masssachusetts where it has been lacking.

32 of WiredWest’s member towns are working to create a regional fiber broadband network to deliver high-speed internet, digital phone, TV and other services to homes and businesses.  The network, estimated to cost $79 million, will be constructed by the Massachusetts Broadband Institute, which will contribute about 40% of the funding for the network and oversee its construction.  WiredWest will own and operate it on behalf of the towns, which are being asked to contribute the rest of the necessary funds.

**Monica Webb, Chair of WiredWest** and a resident of Monterey, said: "We thank Governor Baker and Lieutenant Governor Polito for their support for broadband in western Massachusetts.  They are exactly right in citing the importance of high-speed internet to the economy and quality of life in our communities. We are also grateful to the Western Massachusetts legislative delegation, and the residents and businesses in our communities, for their unwavering support for a robust broadband solution."

WiredWest is run by a Board of Directors comprised of representatives from member towns. **Steve Nelson, Legal/Governance Chair of WiredWest** and a resident of the town of Washington, said: "We recognize that our towns are being asked to make a major financial commitment.  Working through the cooperative structure of WiredWest, they will have oversight on how the network is built and control of its operations going forward."

Financial planning for the network has been extensive and thorough.  **Jim Drawe, Finance Chair of WiredWest** and a Select Board member in Cummington, said: "Between the work we've done and that done by nationally-recognized experts consulting to MBI, we're confident that the network can not only sustain itself, but in time may well generate enough revenues to pay back the town contributions in part or whole."

WiredWest is launching a major campaign to secure town commitments for the project.  To qualify as a "Fiber Town" on the network, 40% of a town's households must sign-up for service and make a small refundable deposit.  This is to assure that the network will be viable in that town.  Then at town meeting authorization for the town's share of the financing must be approved by a 2/3 vote.  MBI will, as soon as this summer, begin the construction process in towns that qualify.

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