

May 18, 2010

Section: Editorials

Article ID: 15114757

Voting for broadband

Editorial

Wednesday May 19, 2010 It's no surprise that 11 of 11 Berkshire towns gave their elected officials permission to consider joining **WiredWest** at town meetings this month, and we'll predict that the six small towns still to act on the issue will vote in favor as well. The importance of providing expanded broadband Internet service is one thing that the Berkshires' rural enclaves, from farm towns to affluent second home communities, can agree upon.

WiredWest is a group of regional broadband activists who want to extend the fiber-optic system that the Massachusetts Broadband Initiative (MBI) is proposing for underserved Western Massachusetts. The group placed a nonbinding referendum on town meeting warrants in 45 communities in the region to gauge interest and residents supported the measures in 27 of 27 towns as of Monday.

The MBI is pursuing \$45 million in federal funding, and U.S. Senator John Kerry recently made the case for the MBI effort before the Senate's Small Business Committee. Governor Patrick, local legislators and town officials are also behind a program that will help the Berkshires in a variety of ways. Police, firefighters and health care providers need faster, more reliable service, as do the freelancers and small businesses tucked away in the county. These town meeting votes augment the case for the necessary funding.

(c) 2010 The Berkshire Eagle. All rights reserved. Reproduced with the permission of Media NewsGroup, Inc. by NewsBank, Inc.