

WiredWest Executive Committee Meeting Minutes

Date / time: Wednesday, March 1, 2017 6:00 PM

Location / address: Hampshire Council of Governments, 99 Main Street, Northampton, MA

Attending: Jim Drawe, Jeremy Dunn, Charley Rose, Bob Labrie, MaryEllen Kennedy

Guests: Marilyn Wilson, Jean Atwater-Williams, Steve Nelson, Leslie Rule, Craig Martin

Called to order at: 6:50 pm

1. Approve minutes of previous meetings – February 15 and 24 – all approved, Bob Labrie abstained
2. Regional Broadband Solution
   1. Presentation – Jim copied
      1. the core slides and financial spreadsheets (at different take rates – at 70%, showing it could cover debt service)
      2. Professional Services spreadsheet
      3. DPU ruling on depreciation reserves
      4. He handed out the MLP information paper for reading only at the end.
      5. Bob handed out the Berkshire Eagle article in Cummington.
   2. Jeremy – we had discussed hiring an OPM for the whole project.
   3. Jim will shadow WG&E meetings with towns.
   4. Gayle proposed we create a spec sheet for towns to ensure consistency of the build – ask WG&E for the specs. Jim – it’s important for the towns to feel comfortable with WG&E – the money will go to the towns, so they will have the contracts. WW intended to be a facilitator for D/E/C, not to be in between. Craig – WG&E may have to raise initial quotes since it won’t know which/how many towns will be involved. Early towns may need to use MB123 since the ring won’t be built initially. Bob – WW was going to own the electronics for the ring.
   5. Outreach will publish subscriber update with a link to the 1 page document once it is posted on the website. Will change text on “may require” a 3% depreciation reserve, since we have DPU ruling that it is not required, but recommend they create a reserve.
   6. Additional questions document - waiting for decision on use of town surcharge – currently Plan A2 is not limited – change will require a vote.
   7. Bob spoke to Fran Ryan of Gazette, they seem interested in more coverage, he talked about the MBI Board meeting announcement and remaining issues.
   8. Jim will contact WG&E & OTT regarding questions from 2/24 meeting.
   9. Charley to contact Aaron re: MLP board meeting and tour of facilities,
3. Carolyn Kirk meeting: Jim shared letter from Carolyn Kirk and a draft on MBI Policy for Grants to Towns. Several folks agreed that the input to the meeting should be less formal. Gayle – start with the desired outcome:
   1. Each town gets full pot (Professional Services + Construction)
   2. Reversal on policies – to connect to MBI123, requirement for towns to stand alone
   3. Help to streamline the build – e.g. simplify makeready, give us the MBI123, or lower costs to connect to MBI123 (Axia controls this now).
   4. MBI Board explicitly approves of towns working with WiredWest.
   5. Use MBI lawyers to help the towns, find solutions to problems
   6. Timetable for actions that we have requested.
   7. Marilyn requested additional money, since they were willing to give additional funds to the Cable companies.
   8. Jim – we should also include needs for towns using MBI-Assisted Build, private providers, towns which are not building (would like to have their money. distributed to other towns – spend all the money which has been allocated).
   9. Meeting outcome – all come together as a team with another meeting schedules.
   10. If MBI is granting authority, WW would like a seat on the board (Steve – could be a conflict to be on the board and asking for money from MBI).
   11. Detailed criteria for applying for grants – need to complete readiness process? Charley thinks town who have been through readiness should be automatically included.
   12. Statement at Mar 27 MBI Board that towns will get grants for D/E money.
   13. Overlashing? Jim – Verizon rules don’t allow – the only option is transferring ownership.
   14. Ask inclusion of towns interested in MBI-Assist in developing the policy. Ask assurance that they will have technical resources to support this program. Concerned about the time involved.
   15. Reduce risk to towns by spending State’s money first.
   16. We should encourage policies that work for all towns (including Leverett & the independent construction towns). [Gayle – Alford & Otis have not signed term sheet, Bob – Leyden signed one, subject to revisions].

Agenda item – we want to work with them crafting a policy for the towns which want to do contract for professional services. Marilyn – just state we have a number of specific items to present. Gayle – work on drafting policy for Professional Services. Jim – and changing existing policy with several bullets. Gayle noted the bullets.

1. Jean – reported on 4 town RFP, newspaper discussion and letter town sent to citizens encouraging them to request refunds. Jim suggests getting a warrant article, ideally for a Special Town Meeting, to form an elected MLP board. She would like a letter sent to Sandisfield subscribers and supplied a draft. Jim has heard that Matrix & WG&E are also bidding, but Jean thinks the group favors Frontier.

MaryEllen to ask Tolland, Monterey, Sandisfield New Marlborough, Tyringhan and Egremont if we can do presentations.

1. MBI update (covered above)
2. Committee Updates

Finance – Bob sent a breakdown on spending categories we expect to use to MBI. We have ~$11,000 left. Bob to ask Melissa for a bank statement.

Jim – Goshen tornado took most of the poles for Geo Propane connection, NextGen showed up but VZN fixed for free, but we do not have insurance. Customer never lost connectivity.

1. Review other ongoing work, including meetings, conference calls

Did Larry Parnass look into accounting of MBI spending? Was he asked? Jim will ask about funds at 3/9 meeting, see if action needed after.

Documentation on how to create an MLP board – it’s wise because board answers to ratepayers, keeps politics away. Recommends that delegates discuss with towns. Worthington has voted to create one, but Charley thinks it would be better to wait until there’s something to manage. The 30B exemption is only for towns with an MLP board. MLP-MLP transactions are exempt for 30B (similar to inter-muni agreement).

1. Other business which could not be reasonably foreseen within 48 hours of meeting

Surcharges – Jeremy – current policy is open-ended – should we keep or ask BoD to vote to limit what can be surcharged. Jim D – could insert “MLP related” into the current document.

1. Set next EC meeting – March 8

Adjourn: 9:15 pm

Future meetings – start crafting a contract between WW & the towns, we need deadline for choice between OTT & WG&E, need to have knowledge of which towns are in to do negotiations with the chosen provider. Steve thinks it’s premature to sign a contract for services which won’t be provided in 2 years (Jeremy – we want them to do marketing, sign up customers in advance of construction). We need to have a contract signed with towns before D/E. Our decision on SP may need to be ready in 30-60 days. Timing of makeready (if done on driveway poles) relative to signing up subscribers.