

**Minutes**

WiredWest Board of Directors Meeting

Cummington Community House

33 Main Street, Cummington MA 01026

Wednesday, November 28, 2018, 7:00 pm

Called to order at 7:00 pm

**Welcome and Introductions**

**Approval of Minutes**

 November 7, 2018

Approved unanimously

**Report from the Chair**

Shutesbury has chosen a different ISP, not WW or WG+E. Windsor previously wondered how WW could support small towns because large towns can dominate. Now the larger towns realizing they can get the same pricing from WG+E, they may not want to subsidize smaller towns. Small towns which want to go on their own will need to have a person to do everything that WW will but Westfield won’t. Doug feels that WW should concentrate on supporting the small towns with limited resources. Westfield is agnostic about working with towns directly or through WW. Doug attended meeting with Cummington, Goshen, Ashfield, Plainfield… recently and suggested they should attend our meeting tonight if they want to have any influence on pricing, etc. Jim states that WW does have some price advantage with WG+E compared with towns contracting with them directly.

**First reading of amended bylaws**

Jim Drawe added some items to the bylaws based on earlier document that had been developed by Jim and Steve Nelson with Diedre (counsel) for town agreement. Jim read the changes and received feedback from the group.

Art moved, DD seconded that we accept the first reading of the bylaws – approved unanimously

**MLP accounting**

David Dvore spoke to Tom Scanlon – he recommended Jim Goulet who does MLP accounting for Leverett. We invited him to EC meeting on Dec 5 – 6pm in Northampton. Kathy Soule-Regine has heard different things about money moving between town & MLP (and vice versa) – this is an important subject.

**Pricing discussion**

Taken out of order to include this discussion. Bill Ennen has revealed to some members pricing of 1 Gb service, phone, MLP fee and total price of several other towns. Prices and fees varied widely, Bill believes that MLP fees were not designed to cover debt service. WW will be setting cost for Internet and phone only, towns will be deciding the MLP fees. It’s difficult to compare the charges between the towns since they are so variable. David Dvore moved we keep the 2-tiered prices, Kent Lew seconded. Kathy noted that WG+E is planning on outreach; we should get more information about their capability. Craig – other services have multiple tiers (e.g. satellite, some DSL). Bob Labrie suggests that economy service only be available for a limited period. Doug McNally - we should emphasize that our lower tier is the minimum standard for broadband (currently 25 Mb), let folks know the standard will increase over time. David Dvore reminds us the economy rate was chosen to be competitive with DSL when phone included. He thinks take rate will suffer if no economy rate. Doug - Windsor will only subsidize drops during initial signup period and would like to limit economy service to that period. Craig doesn’t think that limiting the economy choice is a good marketing idea. Doug – at least one town would like the option of only offering one service level even if WW offers 2. Brenda Airbib stated that Cummington is strongly in favor of offering 1Gb only. Jim - WW did a marketing survey several years ago – they sampled folks in member towns. The survey found price sensitivity in all towns, which led us to choose 2 tiers of service. Brenda – Cummington feels the town should be able to decide (WG+E would allow this). Jim – town MLP fees won’t be advertised – just the ISP rates. Our financial projections show that even if everyone chose economy rates, we can still pay the bills. David – we have been advertising and publicizing these rates for a couple of years. Kent called the question.

Motion: we keep the 2 tiers – standard 1Gb $75, economy 25Mb $59, phone $19.00. Approved, with one No vote. Craig & Trevor abstained.

David – the government program for low income reduces phone or ISP rate by $9.95 – ISP would be reimbursed.

Doug – we have not decided whether to allow towns to only offer 1 tier, will vote on Dec 19. Asks delegates to research the effect on their town. Jim – many providers in ads say “not available in all areas,” we could to that. Jim suggested towns can survey residents, David can support on the website, Kathy - WG+E also does surveys.

Jim – we’re building the networks as a public service, so should strive to connect as many folks as possible.

Next meeting – we need to set a subsidized rate, possibly lower than govt subsidy. We need to think about commercial customer prices also.

**Communication strategy**

At this time, our communications committee is down to Bob Labrie & David. Jim asked them to create talking points. David pointed out we have some documents on the web site. Doug asked him to distribute to delegates for discussion at the next meeting. Doug – town should consider backing up from the ‘lighting up’ date and decide when to pick the ISP. He feels Windsor must decide by January. ISP decision should come soon after construction contract. Jim has sent the town agreement to Diedre – will notify towns when she has reviewed. Kathy – Westfield is anxious for towns to decide, so they know how much to ramp up to support the towns.

Some towns will be asking their legal advisers to review the town agreement. Doug asked towns to report if they’ve had the review done and who is their lawyer – may save some towns from asking from same review.

Becket is planning a Special Town Meeting at end of January to approve the additional borrowing, if not approved, they may accept a proposal from Matrix. Bob Gross – Bill Ennen said the CAF II money is only for telephone – they are working to get that changed.

Tues Dec 4 at 10:30 Westfield will host a teleconference on CAF II. The Commonwealth has offered to put up $1M needed to back the request. Doug recommends we don’t count on the CAF II money – likely we may not see it until 2021 if at all.

Jim – will be talking to Rich Carnall of WG+E about the onboarding process – how to bring the towns up and connect customers. Asked delegates to think about the process and come up with suggestions on what is needed.

Another question – who moves MBI cable during make ready? Kent asked WGE – they said pole owners will ask the licensee to move their wires.

**Confirm and Schedule next BoD meetings** 5 minutes

December 19

January 16

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

**Adjourn**

David Dvore moved, approved unanimously. Adjourned at 9:30pm