

**Minutes**

WiredWest Board of Directors and Executive Committee Meeting

Online

Wednesday, March 17, 2021, 6:30 pm

**Attending:** Jim Drawe, Doug McNally, Jeff Piemont, Sheila Litchfield, Jeremy Dunn, Scott Rogers, Kent Lew, Don Hall, David Dvore, Don Hall, Kathy Soule-Regine, MaryEllen Kennedy

**Called to order at 6:32pm**

**Approval of the warrant by Executive Committee**

Kent moved that the warrant be voted on by the EC, MaryEllen seconded.

David asked why we are paying Crocker. We collect from George Propane and send it to Crocker, their ISP.

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| --- | --- |
| **Name** | **Vote** |
| Doug | **Y** |
| David | **Y** |
| Kent | **Y** |
| MaryEllen | **Y** |

 Approved

**Approval of Minutes**

 January 20

Moved Sheila

Seconded DD

Result – approved unanimously

 February 17

Moved David

Seconded Sheila

Result - unanimously

**Report from the Executive Director**

Jim sent his note for this discussion to the delegates. There is information on what is needed to qualify for the Emergency Broadband Benefit. New Salem experienced a line cut - a very large branch fell. Washington’s Internet was ‘hobbled’ for almost 2 weeks, degrading progressively. It was difficult to troubleshoot: page loads were slow, Ooma calls dropped, VPN access dropped. The final fix – replaced Nokia switch & optics, MBI Juniper switch & optics and the connection between the 2. Labor and materials are covered by WW, electronic replacements are handled by WCF, no charge. WCF also replaces ONTs.

CRM access – we had access for billing, then it was removed for all towns and WW. Jim is working on this with John Leary, to develop reports for the needed information. WW does still have access to the billing information. Kathy – we lost access to the customer conversations during the change. Kent was using notes to communicate with CS and was also tracking installations.

Annual billing for municipal accounts. This could simplify the billing and payments for the towns. Jim will discuss with WCF.

Jim is still looking for an auditor, he has a few new names. WW does not need an MLP accountant, we are just a business. Probably not good to have the same auditor do WW and the member MLPs. Kent proposed we find an auditor for the MLPs as a group via WW.

Towns still under construction (Heath, Becket) should not be included in the emergency retainage contract, since the construction company should be doing those repairs. Jeff reports the contractor wants to hand over ownership of each FSA when it is completed. Even if not covered by the builder’s insurance, the construction company may still be the best choice to do the repair.

We are 6 months from the end of our contract with WG&E. Since they are still building, Jim’s inclination is to remain with them. Kathy & Doug agree that we do not need to do an RFP at this time. Kent would like us to confirm that the terms will not be changed greatly when we renew. Bob – we should look at towns whose contract with ISP is up for renewal. Kathy – we should contact Shutesbury.

Kent has not been contacted about setting up environmental monitoring in Washington. Jim told John Leary we need interior camera and monitored entry at minimum.

**Approve Policy for phone during service suspension**

We have a few customers who are in suspension and paying $19.99 for phone. We are thinking of eliminating suspension and just asking folks to cancel service. Jeremy – complicated policies lead to unhappy customers. Policies should be fair and easy to understand.

**Prorated final bills - discussion and vote on policy**

Jim asked to skip.

**Policy for termination of phone and internet service because of nonpayment.**

 Discussion and vote.

MLP managers have asked to be warned of customers who are going to be cut off in advance. The proposed policy distributed to delegates, includes the notice to MLP manager. Initial cut off of Internet, will reduce bandwidth to a speed that will support phone only. The final cut off will be after 1 month. David says WCF needs to show that communication to the customer has been received and acknowledged, to show they are aware that they may be cut off. Kathy – many folks don’t answer unknown numbers or read all email. Kent – if they leave a voicemail, that should be sufficient. Jeremy – FCC link says that voice customers must be notified of impending cutoff in writing (link in chat text). Jim does not see many late payments in our towns. Jeff asked if we were able to add a tax lien to recoup payments; this is not likely.

Doug moved we submit suggested changes to the cancellation policy to WCF.

Jeff seconded. Roll call

Jeff P – y

Sheila L – y

MaryEllen – y

David – no (needs an affirmative response from customer)

Doug – y

Kent – y

The motion passes. Jim will present to WCF.

**Policy for customer cancelation of internet and/or phone and reinstatement.**

This is to replace the current suspension policy. Jeff thinks the bills for partial months should be prorated, and does not see why they should be charged an additional $99 activation fee even after 12 months. Kent – WCF asked if they could avoid prorating, not included in current contract. Doug suggests that Jim ask WCF for bills to be prorated. They do that for the first bill but have not been willing to prorate after that. Jim will bring the current proposal to WCF to see if they can implement.

**Backhaul bandwidth for towns**

To maintain flexibility, when towns expand bandwidth, John Leary does not write a new contract but goes month to month. This means towns won’t see the discount for 5Gb. WCF are starting to build rings, and when they are built, we’ll have new contracts for bandwidth. Currently this is handled as a WW expense, not charged back to the towns.

Becket hut lighting up tomorrow, they have 925 customers signed up currently (about 50%).

**Drop cost discussion**

Customer Service asked for the towns’ drop policies. Jim has sent all but Heath’s. Sheila said it was sent, but she will supply to Jim to forward.

Doug – future discussion of ongoing drop policy. Jim – that is what we just sent to CS. Doug asked if we should pay for the electronics. Kent is considering purchasing a stock of ONTs, NIDs and drop(?) fiber. He estimates costs of ONT - $140, NID - $25-30.

Kathy – New Salem’s drop policy went from $3,000 to $300 subsidy and folks who have signed up since expressed appreciation for help with installation cost.

**Planning for tree trimming and other maintenance in FY22**

WCF has contract with Asplundh and said each town should have their own contract. Jim expects power companies will handle most of the trimming on main roads. Drops are more of an issue, but we may not have access to private property. Towns should assess their situation, so we have some idea of the demand. This is a shared WW cost. Kathy – New Salem has an active tree committee, who are very involved in any tree work. Rowe – all roads are scenic roads, planning board must approve any cutting. Jeremy – power companies don’t clear any branches in comm space. He recommends against trimming drops; expects it will be cheaper just to fix breaks.

Verizon only and town owned poles will need their own tree work. Give Jim an estimate of mileage or number of poles which may require tree work. David said we should inform customers about maintaining trees around drops. He wonders if we could piggyback on work for power companies, contract them to do the comm space as well as power space. Doug thinks that is impractical. Jim note that towns can only trim trees in right of way.

**Finance Report**

Everyone has a copy of finance report for each town. Jim discussed the distribution report, currently we expect distributable revenue (-10% reserve) of $115,914.87 based on current income.

Refund status

No new requests by mail in last 30 days (a handful email ones).

**Town updates**

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

**Confirm next BoD meetings**

April 21 6:30pm

Future - every 3rd Wednesday at 6:30pm

**Adjourn 8:32pm**

Doug moved, Jeff seconded

Bob Labrie has retired from his day job!