

**Minutes**

WiredWest Special Board of Directors and Executive Committee Meeting

Online

Wednesday, November 3, 2021, 6:30 pm

Attending: Doug McNally, Jeff Piemont, Bob Labrie, Don Hall, David Gordon, Jim Drawe, Sheila Litchfield, Kathy Soule-Regine, Kent Lew, Jim Drawe, David Dvore

Guests: Bill Fontes (Heath MLB)

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

**Approval of the warrant by Executive Committee**

Moved by Kent, Second MaryEllen.

Discussion: Kent asked about some of the ISP charges, which looked like construction charges. Jim and Jessica have been working with WCF clarifying charges; we don’t pay charges that are in dispute. Kent also asked about the Lightspeed charge, so far only to Rowe. Possibly other towns’ warranty period have not expired. David says this was for Nokia support, which would speed up replacement of any failed equipment. Jim says there’s been no failures since installation but feels it also covers software updates and are important.

Vote:

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

Passes unanimously.

**Approval of Minutes**

October 20, 2021

Sheila moved, Jeff seconded.

Approved unanimously.

**Vote to enter Executive Session** passed over

**WG&E contract renewal**

Jim has reviewed the current relationship with WCF and does not feel we should issue an RFP for a new ISP/NO.

Free routers and Telos cost about $500,000; WCF saved this cost to the towns. He recommends we do a 3-5 year contract at the price WCF suggests.

Jeff thinks the equipment price would be depreciated and WCF wouldn’t want them back. He knows Telos are free with a 12-month Ooma contract. Kent agrees the buyout cost would probably be lower but doesn’t want to be held hostage by the equipment. In the future, we should plan for the cost of the equipment.

Jim reports that Crocker & Otelco charge $22/customer. He believes their repair costs are higher, but repairs are fairly rare. The difference between that price and the $28 we’re paying could cover the cost of new equipment. Both Crocker and Otelco have phone switches, so might need new OLTs with RJ-11 (traditional phone jacks) and have to port numbers again.

Doug feels our relationship is being tied up with the new ring structure. Non-WW towns have expressed concern that we might leave the rings, disrupting the new networks.

Kathy wonders if we would have a better experience with another provider, we could have similar ones with a new provider. They have done a lot of work for us, e.g. CAF II – what happens with that if we leave?

Sheila has found Westfield to be extremely responsive lately, they’ve heard our issues and are trying to respond. We should have a consistent message to Westfield and other towns about our future plans.

David says we need to consider what our future will be with WCF. He still has concerns that the management is not so competent and is not hiring the right people. They have no depth in network engineering; the delay in doing the rings was because the same person had to do all the design for the MPLS network and the second MBI circuits first. He doesn’t feel they are managing the relationship with MBI/LocalLinx well. There was another outage of 16 hours for Rowe and a few towns recently. WCF is going after other towns, how can they support them with existing resources?

Jeff is not sure that another ISP would be better and doesn’t see much cost difference if we must buy routers. Becket is not interested in leaving WCF until construction is complete and they have a year of full operation.

Doug – the other geo clusters and towns outside WW also have the concerns about staffing and skills that David discussed. They are saying that they want to see additional resources and are willing to work with WCF to improve service. WCF needs to know they will have the towns to hire additional resources.

Kathy agrees changing vendors will be disruptive. Our subscribers have just gotten used to the service and may not respond well to a change. Supporting WCF may get us to a better place.

David feels that this is the time to discuss the issues with WCF during contract negotiations and support them in improving their service.

Kent is not in favor of leaving at this point. He’d like WW to position itself so that we are able to change providers at some time in the future. He’s concerned that WCF waits till the last minute to provide information or proposals and don’t give us time to negotiate. Towns should not think that leaving WCF would affect the rings, they are supposed to be ISP neutral.

Doug – our Executive Director negotiates with WCF. He understands our position about the need for additional personnel.

Jim will call Tom Flaherty tomorrow to move forward on the negotiations. He agrees the rings will be ISP agnostic, John Leary is willing to buy the circuits and bill the towns even if they are not WCF customers.

Jeff – perhaps the new contract could include a clause that we would own the routers after a few years. Jim – we should have money in our depreciation budget in a few years to replace the routers.

David – WCF does have good customer service, tech support, and field techs. Rings – if they terminate in 1 Fed, multiple providers are available, but if they terminate in Westfield there may not be as many options. WCF could have an additional contractor instead of hiring permanent staff, possibly at a somewhat lower level who is trained on their systems.

Kathy – the East cluster includes 1 town with a different provider, so rings should be provider neutral.

Kent would really like to see a contract to consider as soon as possible. He doesn’t think many changes are needed. 3-5 years would be okay, but 10 is too long.

Doug – Jim is authorized to negotiate the contract but should emphasize we see the need for additional personnel.

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

**Confirm next BoD meetings**

November 17 6:30pm

December 15 6:30 pm

Future - every 3rd Wednesday at 6:30pm

**Adjourn** 7:35pm