

**Agenda**

WiredWest Board of Directors and Executive Committee Meeting

Online

Wednesday, June 15, 2022, 6:30 pm

Attending: Doug McNally, Jim Drawe, Jeff Piemont, Don Hall, David Dvore, MaryEllen Kennedy, Kent Lew, Bob Labrie, Bob Gross, Art Schwenger, Kathy Soule-Regine, Sheila Litchfield

Guests: Sean Fitzgerald (SHELD), David Gordon (for Heath), Dick Spencer

Called to order at: 6:31pm

**Approval of the warrant by Executive Committee**

Moved: Doug

Seconded: MaryEllen

Discussion: Jim $.48 tax increase was discussed with WCF, our customers will see a credit to their bills for this and it will not be added to their bill in future.

Vote:

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

Result: Approved unanimously

**Approval of Minutes**

June 8, 2022

Moved: Jeff

Seconded: Doug

Discussion: Jeff noted some typos

Vote: to approve the minutes as corrected

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| **Member Town** | **Vote** |
| Becket | Y |
| Heath | Y |
| New Salem | Y |
| Rowe | Y |
| Washington | Y |
| Windsor | Y |

Result: approved unanimously

**South Hadley Electric Light Department**

Sean discussed his presentation – provided to delegates before the meeting.

Partnering with HG&E as network operator (NO), they are now the ISP for South Hadley, Leverett, Shutesbury

The HG&E network map was displayed. South Hadley Fibersonic has customer service, engineering. HG&E is Network Operator. 25 full time employees. Expanding ‘in a careful way.’

Doug - Windsor MLP concerned about splitting ISP/NO. Sean WCF outsources to many in-house consultant. SHELD/HG&E work is seamless to customers. All billing, customer service and helpdesk done in one place.

Doug – some concern about transition to new vendor. We are using OOMA and SmartRG. Sean - They are going through this with Shutesbury. They are porting all their phone customers in a bulk process. Only impact to customers is they will need to reset voicemail. Sean heard WCF may replace OOMA. Shutesbury is keeping their routers and they will be serviced.

Kent – the routers are owned by WCF, so keeping them may need some negotiation. Does SHELD provide routers to their customers? Real question – phone tech support is remote, how do you integrate the remote customer service when there is a need for phone truck roll? Sean – they use Netegrity for their helpdesk, now have transitioned their electric customers to it also. Phone vendor is Big River, Netegrity fields their calls, escalate to Big River when needed. They have 4 telecom techs (+ 15 Holyoke, + Sertex) and would hire additional techs if needed.

MaryEllen – do they brand the customer service? Sean- Shutesbury wanted their name to be in the initial announcement. It’s most expensive to customize like that.

David Gordon – what’s their timeline for moving Shutesbury? They began about 30 days ago and will be complete by August. Accounts have been loaded. Phone porting is the biggest step, will be done in bulk. They will convert Leverett by December.

Doug – we are 6 towns – how long would it take to convert about 2800 customers? Sean – it’s data moving, they are now doing 1400 customers in 6 months. He is confident that they can handle this. Recommends checking with Gayle about how it’s going. Would need to investigate routers and phone service.

Jeff – some phone systems need a different ONT or inside equipment. Would you allow us to continue with Ooma? Sean – probably, would need some investigation.

Jeff – WW brands itself as the ISP, are you willing to support that? Sean – they are in favor of ‘white label’ to give the towns flexibility. Acquiring our towns would help with their cost structure.

Jeff – do we need multiple IGAs? Sean – basically 1 IGA with them covers ISP & NO.

Jeff – what’s SHELDs favored vendor? Sean – they checked if Nokia can be supported – yes. They use Calix, we could see their equipment at their streaming center.

Doug – RRR 4 clusters, our towns are in all of them. We will be using Nokia. How do you see the support when other cluster members are using WCF as provider. Sean – would need to work with HG&E (they may already support Nokia equipment).

Doug – feels that Windsor is only interested if we can get a total price per customer. Some proposals haven’t included all costs. Sean – they are an MLP, not a commercial business. They would need to do some research on the RRR design but are willing to provide a full cost.

KSR – WCF was basing cost on number of customers. Is SHELD considering a similar model? Sean - Right now, they are just working with individual towns. He would try to keep charges similar to all the towns they support.

What is SHELD charging? $21.95/customer for Internet, $34.50 for Internet + phone for Leverett. Leverett already had contract with HG&E, so their costs were different. There are additional charges for some truck rolls. The economies of scale would help them.

Doug – additional concern is how much SHELD plans to expand. Sean – there are more providers available, so he doesn’t think there’s too much growth potential. We are attractive because we have already built our networks and have a similar service now. He does not want to get too big. Otelco is investing in building fiber in the region (in new towns). He believes the MLP model is a better fit for smaller MLPs.

Art asked about what happens in a large outage. Sean – contract would include a repair time and he would hire additional techs if needed. They share their operations center with Sertex.

**Discussion of WG&E contract**

Jim told them we are happy with changes except for their pricing proposal based on the term of the contract.

There’s been no response from WCF since. To keep the current price, we’d have to sign a 5-year contract. Doug thinks many towns are willing to sign an 8-10 year contract. Kent would like to see an analysis of our budget based on the 3 year contract price. We won’t be able to truly compare costs from other vendors unless we do an RFP. KSR & Kent pointed out the WCF tech support has been very good. David cautions that WCF may not have the technical depth to solve a complex problem if it comes up.

**Backhaul costs – shared or town specific?**

Discussion: Jeff – when thinking about backhaul and lowering those costs. Each town decides on how much backhaul is needed, the clusters complicate things because some members do not belong to WW. Currently backhaul costs are shared, based on our original model of WW towns sharing backhaul. He feels that now backhaul should be allocated to each town. Doug agrees. David – one reason Rowe stayed in WW was that backhaul would be a shared expense, because their backhaul costs would be high. When RRR is implemented, they will be saving much of the current backhaul cost. Doug – central cluster was just finalized, so we should soon have a good idea of the cost. We should not make this decision until the new backhaul costs are known.

Jeff – thought WW was about achieving economies of scale and sharing risk. The backhaul is not shared by the WW towns, so sharing the cost may not be best for the towns.

The southern and eastern clusters may not save as much.

**Finance Report**

Jim discussed the current financials through May. Disaster crew retainage is lower than expected. Repair budget looks good. He’d like to negotiate only charges for truck rolls, not retainage since we have had little need so far.

ISP is lower, fewer customers than expected. Backhaul charges lower. Telephone over budget – more customers than estimated; revenue is also higher.

Net income is over by 48% than estimate.

Pole license lower, MaryEllen to contact National Grid, who hasn’t billed New Salem yet.

Jim should have the projection for shared revenue about July 15.

Jim has emailed the final audit report, David to post on the website.

**Town updates**

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

Bob Labrie reported on the Investment Committee. They first considered risk tolerance. Policy was sent to delegates before the board meeting. We will discuss and vote at the next meeting.

Art Schwenger – Heath is working on a plan for responding to emergencies. How is WW involved? Jim – WW pays the bills. He’d prefer to be notified if repairs are needed.

**Confirm next BoD meetings**

July 20, 2022, 6:30pm

August 19,2022, 6:30pm

Future - every 3rd Wednesday at 6:30pm

**Adjourn** 8:50pm

Moved: Art

Seconded: Kent

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