

Shutesbury Broadband Committee		
8_30_2021	5:00 PM DST	On Line Zoom Meeting
Facilitator	Gayle Huntress	
Minutes keeper	Jim Hemingway	
Committee Attendees	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Gayle Huntress <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Steve Schmidt <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Graeme Sephton	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Jim Hemingway <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Craig Martin Kent Whitney
Other		
Approved minutes for 7/21/2021 and 8/5/2021 meetings		

Brief discussion about whether we are now just the MLP Committee or the Broadband/MLP Committee for website purposes. Gayle will make some minor adjustments to our website to clarify elected board vs. broadband committee members.

Hut Report from Graeme: All is well with the hut. 39 help tickets from Crocker this month. 3 phone connections were cancelled – possible trend, perhaps? 10 repairs done this month – 9 drop repairs, 1 power surge problem that knocked out an ONT, all as a result of storm damage. All repairs fortunately took place during regular business hours. Repairs this month were similar to those reported a year ago. – we currently have 761 subscribers all told.

The Town Hall has 2 ONTs, one of which is for the police. The Town pays for both services.

Financial Report from Steve: \$67,091 our current balance. Follow up on last month's report from Crocker that 80 customers were using the \$45/month suspended service option. Steve went back through the records and created a spreadsheet, which showed that the 80 refers to the total number of monthly billings for this service since we began operations. In fact, 10 individual customers used it in the months of February through April of 2020, and only 5 customers used it in the winter months of 2021. All other monthly usages were even less. Our income from the use of that option was \$1,530 in FY21. Discussion about removing the \$250 reactivation fee – charged when service has been disconnected at a property for over 90 days, but to retain the \$45 suspended service option. Discussed concerns about the impact the \$250 fee could have on a new tenant who might only be living in Shutesbury for a short length of time and the negative effect the \$250 fee could have on ShutesburyNet's reputation, offering as an example a student who moves to Shutesbury having heard about its excellent internet service, only to be unable to use it due to a prohibitive charge. It was also mentioned that a new tenant is not responsible for a landlord/property owner having failed to maintain service in the past. Crocker has gotten rare instances of pushback about the \$250 reactivation fee from subscribers. Kathy at Crocker has waived the fee on a couple of occasions. Seasonal homeowners who opt for the \$45 disconnect/reconnect fee are usually not a problem. Gayle suggests we continue to let Crocker's billing department use their discretion as to when to charge such a fee. It was pointed out that this would result in a fee charged inequitably. Crocker does charge a \$49.95 activation fee for new accounts, to cover their administrative costs. Crocker retains that fee in full. It's a complicated issue in some respects. But if we waive the \$250 fee now and people unfairly take advantage of this change, reinstatement of the \$250 fee in the future would be very problematic. Graeme suggests spreading out the \$250 fee over a 12 month period to make paying it more palatable. Gayle suggests keeping the \$250 fee for another year, since next year our rates may change and might be lower. Steve and Graeme: ask Kathy to keep track of the number of complaints by customers for paying the fee for future reference and we will revisit this topic in a year..

The \$406,870 BAN (Bond Anticipation Note), which the town borrowed to pay a portion of the construction costs, was paid off in full by the town treasurer on 8/20/2021. The funding sources were: \$123,544 of MLP retained earnings from FY20, \$130,000 MLP FY22 appropriation, \$25,500 MBI grant, and \$127,826 from other town funds. The 10 year note is the only remaining construction debt that the MLP is responsible for paying off during the next eight years.

Manager Report from Gayle: Spam voice mail is currently difficult to eliminate. We would like voice mail to work better in addition to having some form of group delete for spam filtering. Spam reduction remains an ongoing and evolving issue for which there is no easy solution, locally or nationwide.

E911 calls: Steve called 911 to report the accident concerning the trash removal truck a few weeks ago and discovered that his call was routed to a regional 911 service rather than to Shelburne dispatch which produced a short and unexpected delay (the accident had already been reported separately so responders were already being dispatched by the time Steve called). Calls made from Shutesbury landline (Crocker) voip phones are routed correctly to local dispatch. Crocker will check why Steve's call didn't go to local dispatch (could have been because of call overflow). It's important for our ShutesburyNet subscribers to note that local E911 calls that will automatically connect with Shelburne dispatch only works with the phone service that Crocker provides. Calls made from cell phones will not initially or automatically connect with Shelburne. We have tried to educate residents that WiFi and Cellular calling does not provide the robust features that landline voip calling provides and have three FAQs about it on our website. Let's consider sending out a message to all subscribers about this to remind them? Will revisit this topic during our next meeting. All of the E911 'landline' calls made with the service our fiber network provides are automatically tagged with street addresses so that Shelburne dispatch knows immediately where the 911 call is coming from. We have asked Crocker to check all of the phone numbers that ShutesburyNet and Crocker provide service for to be sure that they are tagged properly. We will let Walter Tibbets, our local emergency coordinator, know what our findings are once Crocker completes its review.

Sand Hill Road future development discussion – the MLP has service to 106 Sand Hill Road, which is where our fiber ends. The owner of land across from and below #106 contacted Gayle to find out more about the process for getting service if they were to develop their property in the future. We can get fiber to any future development past that point should that happen.. Gayle has asked Kevin Rudin, Shutesbury's tax assessor, to let us know if any future development, here or some place else, is in the works so we can identify any make-ready needs well in advance since it takes so long and also have adequate time to sort out development costs per our policies.

The WG&E proposal for network resiliency and backhaul option discussion: there are several parts to consider – WG&E will do the engineering work to design a redundant backhaul network for Leverett, Shutesbury, Wendell and New Salem for the cost of \$8,587. They did get an estimate from another engineering firm which produced a bid of over \$16,000 for the same work for comparison purposes. WG&E's bid or offer is much lower because they already know so much about how our networks are configured and operate in each town within this group. Graeme thinks that the WG&E proposal is a very good one. Graeme noted that both Nokia and the Calix E7, which we use in our hut, can do MPLS which will enable us to divide and share bandwidth between the four towns which could provide a significant cost savings for backhaul, despite the fact that three different ISPs provide service (Crocker, OTT and WG&E/WiredWest) This proposal would also be ISP agnostic. WG&E has a team of engineers to do the initial work at a cost of \$2,862. To get such a network design and conceptual study to come up with this proposal Graeme feels is a very good value. ARPA money should cover the equipment and installation costs for this redundant network construction. Time line: some possible delays for the delivery of the equipment needed, but the design will take three weeks and then maybe 6-9 months for equipment installation and testing. We also have multiple backhaul options to choose from as well – alternate backhaul could come from Verizon as well as MBI. Gayle will let Crocker know about this. Crocker recommends we increase our current 250 meg backup with MBI up to 1 gig since 250 gig is barely enough to run our phone service. We will make this increase while the details of a larger redundancy plan get implemented. A vote was taken whether to accept the WG&E proposal, all three MLP Members voted yes (Graeme Sephton, yes; Steve Schmidt, yes and Jim Hemingway, yes.) to accept the WG&E proposal. Gayle will notify Tom Flaherty at WG&E about our acceptance of this proposal tomorrow, August 31st.

Security audits: Internet security continues to be a hot topic nationally. Simplistically, there are two classes of vulnerability. The first involves the end user - trojan horses, infected software, identity theft, etc. Should we educate our users about the need for security and about best practices? The second involves a direct attack on our (and our ISP's) infrastructure (switches, routers, etc) that could lead to service disruptions. Should we consider an outside security audit of our system? Difficult to know how deeply we should go into this process at this time, not only because of the cost but also because of the amount of time that it would take to do any sort of a security audit and what it should cover. Gayle suggested reaching out to some of the outfits that do security audits that HG&E gave us a while ago to probe them a little for recommendations as to how to proceed with such an audit.

Meeting adjourned at 6:55pm.

Set Next Meeting

Wednesday, September 15, 2021, 5:00pm