

Shutesbury Broadband Committee		
01_17_2024	5:00 PM EST	On Line Zoom Meeting
Facilitator	Gayle Huntress	
Minutes keeper	Jim Hemingway	
Committee Attendees	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Gayle Huntress <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Jim Hemingway <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Steve Schmidt <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Craig Martin <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Graeme Sephton	
Other		
Approved minutes November 15, 2023		

Hut Report: Graeme is exercising the newly replaced HVAC unit. He will also install a Gigaspire U6 in the hut to replace the existing Linksys router.

23 calls for tech support this last month, significantly lower than normal, which is usually around 40-50 calls.

The transfer of our fiber network on the old poles to the new three phase ones that have just been installed between the Shutesbury and Wendell electric substations is going to cost us almost \$100,000. We will pay for this partly out of regular maintenance and partly out of emergency reserve funds. Also pursuing state funds/assistance but this is unlikely to come through. Current Financial picture: Roughly \$73K is currently in our account, about average for this time of year. Gayle has worked on updating our website on Shutesbury.org last month. In particular, the FAQ page has been divided into 7-8 sections, making it much more manageable.

The Shutesbury MLP was approved for a Digital Equity grant by MBI (Massachusetts Broadband Institute), which will be combined and shared with Leverett. Next Tuesday MBI is hosting a digital equity workshop which Gayle will attend to learn more about how this grant can be of use to some of our subscribers in Shutesbury.

Progress has been made with the IRU with New Salem. Donna McNicol, our Town lawyer, has looked over the arrangement which will allow New Salem to connect to CrownCastle by means of our fiber network, and she has made a few changes to the IRU. However, New Salem wishes to pay for the costs of this dark fiber connection up front along with its yearly maintenance costs. And so Gayle is working on how to make these changes to the IRU to include these costs in this agreement between Shutesbury and New Salem.

DigSafe: we are currently registered with DigSafe. The way it now works is that DigSafe notifies Gayle about an impending situation that involves a dig near some of our buried fiber, and she has 24-48 hours to notify SHELD if the proposed dig might impose a hazard on our buried fiber. Once that happens, SHELD will send out an engineer to mark the location of our fiber. But what if Gayle is not around within this period to notify SHELD? Can this entire notification process be turned over to SHELD completely without Gayle having to interact with this notification

process? Gayle asked SHELD for an estimate on how much this would cost and SHELD estimated that it would cost \$9,700 a year plus the time needed for someone from SHELD to survey and mark the location. Gayle asked Leverett what arrangement they had with DigSafe if any, and Leverett reported that they paid little attention to this potential problem and had no association with DigSafe. And so far they have never had any issues with underground fiber being damaged. And neither have we had any problems during the three years that came before we were connected to DigSafe. And so the MLP and Gayle decided that the costs of having SHELD take over the DigSafe operation was not worth the cost, and that we would continue with the way things are working now.

Notes about the upcoming FY2025 budget:

The Connective America Fund (CAF-II) we signed up for some years ago is finally paying off. We will be getting \$14,730 for the next 7 years and three times that for the three years that have already passed. And so we can count on this income in our FY25 budget.

Everyone agreed to bump up our maintenance budget up to \$70K.

Gayle is awaiting an actual figure for what our insurance costs will be next year and perhaps for the following years.

Some of the budget items in the FY2024 budget have been combined in order to make the accounting easier per Gail Weiss's recommendations.

Not that many people have signed up for Lifeline CAF-II, and so that administrative cost is lower but is likely to increase next year.

Currently we have 776 subscribers with 8 suspended (seasonal subscribers)

Jim will ask fellow Fincom members if we can submit our budget on March 1 prior to the MLP's meeting with the Finance Committee instead of a month before the March 14 Fincom Meeting which Gayle will attend.

Steve is concerned about the amount we are setting aside for depreciation. According to Calix there is no end of life expectation for the E7s, and so we might not have to replace them in a few years. Each line card in the four E7s cost around \$9K (and we have 7 line cards). Not long ago the MLP did increase our yearly depreciation figure from 38K to 45K. Steve thinks we might be able to reduce that \$45K if necessary.

Gayle has been keeping track of her MLP hours, and her job is not getting any easier, unfortunately. And so there might be some adjustment to her compensation once she consults with SHELD about what the market rate is for someone of her job description.

A brief Router discussion, a big ongoing topic the MLP talks about at almost every meeting. The big question is how to determine whether a managed router that comes with a 24/7 support service that Calix offers and combines with their Gigaspire U6 routers is worth the cost. Would the imagined improvement in customer experience be worth the cost? Would it be possible to get some financial support from the Digital Equity resource to help us pay for this managed service which would be roughly \$2 per subscriber per month? Needless to say, improving technical support for our Shutesbury subscribers is a complicated subject.

Meeting adjourned at 6:10pm