

Shutesbury Broadband Committee		
5_21_2025	5:00pm DST	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	Craig Martin
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Graeme Sephton	
Other		
Approved minutes April 16, 2025		

Hut Report: Graeme repaired the door seal with masking tape. Graeme met with Zak, the tech, from Pioneer Valley Associates at the hut to take a look at our defective HVAC unit. To repair HVAC #1 (now designated as the “north” HVAC) which failed a month or so ago when it stopped cooling the air in the hut, Zak and Graeme determined that there is, most likely, a refrigerant leak somewhere in the system. Replacing the refrigerant lines rather than the heat exchanger would, most likely, fix the problem. Cost estimate for that repair would be \$1,700 to replace the refrigerant lines between the inner and outer units. The cost of this repair would increase dramatically if the refrigerant lines between the two units turn out not to be the cause of the problem.

44 repair tickets this month, SHELD reports, only 16 of which were internet service related. The others mostly involved billing issues.

Financial – we have about \$70K currently in our account. Gayle is now keeping track of our accounting without waiting for revenue and expenses to clear from Town reports so the amounts that she reports are more current. Gayle would like to have better access to the bookkeeping that Gail is doing for the MLP, but that would require having a portal independent of Gail’s to the accounting software that Gail and the Town use, and subscribing to that new portal would cost the MLP \$700 a year. Gayle, however, has created a practical and accurate way to access our financial condition without the long, up to 3 month delay in updating our expense report that would come if we were strictly dependent on Gail for this information. Gayle and Steve had a lengthy discussion about this new, more up to date way of keeping track of our financial condition, which includes an extensive list of credits and debits, both of which are now far more current thanks to Gayle’s new way of keeping track of our current financial condition.

Gayle and the MLP are still waiting for SHELD and HG&E to do the backup test we have asked them to do which would be to test the reliability of our network connection should our main 10gb/sec link to Crown Castle fail for any reason.

Craig has sent Gayle a list of possible new MLP member recruits should any one of the three current members – Graeme, Jim or Steve – decide to retire.

The MBI announced that on Thursday, May 29, they will be doing some network maintenance on our backup line, which will not be available for roughly a 6 hour period on that date.

Steve is ready to represent the MLP's FY26 budget at our upcoming Annual Town Meeting at the end of this month. Gayle will be doing a lot of traveling this summer and won't be quite as available as she might normally be. Our next MLP meeting will be on July 9th at 5pm.

The MLP and Gayle had a lengthy discussion of the Digital Equity Grant proposal that she has been working on for quite some time. The MBI just announced that the Federal funding for this grant has been cut. This news was a big disappointment for Gayle who has been working diligently on obtaining close to \$56,000 in funding for the MLP to undertake various initiatives that would support the use and availability of Broadband here in Shutesbury. She reached out to FRCOG to find out whether she should continue her efforts to apply for this grant, the deadline to apply for which is June 1st. FRCOG reported that the grant money might instead come from ARPA, though that was by no means a certainty. The recommendation from FRCOG was to continue to apply for the grant funding and hope for the best. But that would be a bit of a gamble since the MLP would have to spend the grant money first and then submit the invoices for this work without any assurance that we would be reimbursed.

The MLP then went through a lengthy discussion about whether we should make any changes to the 4 areas in our grant proposal in order to protect ourselves by spending money that we might otherwise spend if funding from ARPA sources turns out to be unreliable. This spending would have to take place in the next fiscal year in order to qualify for reimbursement from the grant. There are 4 areas for spending the grant monies in Shutesbury that Gayle and the MLP have proposed:

- 1) Connecting currently unserved households, especially ones that are eligible for Lifeline support.
- 2) Installing a network in the new Library building, public WiFi and devices
- 3) Supporting the process of replacing some, if not all of the routers in the homes of our subscribers.
- 4) Providing some tech support for WiFi and network problems in some of our subscriber's households who are having problems grappling with in-home electronics. Up to \$10,000 from the Grant would go towards providing this in-home tech support.

Despite all the uncertainty around this Digital Equity Grant, Gayle felt and the MLP generally agreed that we should still apply for the Grant funding and proceed cautiously. Hopefully the MLP will not wind up spending some or most of the \$56,000 only to discover that no

reimbursement would be forthcoming by roughly this time next year. We will try to find ways to spend the money within the directives of the grant that we otherwise would have spent without it.

Meeting concluded at 6:25pm