

Shutesbury Select Board Meeting Minutes
May 24, 2016 Shutesbury Town Hall

Select Board members present: April Stein/Chair, Mike Vinskey, and Michael DeChiara

Staff present: Becky Torres/Town Administrator; Linda Avis Scott/Administrative Secretary

Broadband Committee members present: Gayle Huntress, Craig Martin, Steve Schmidt, Eric Stocker, Graham Sephton, Frank Citino, Ayers Hall

Broadband Committee by remote participation due to distance: Asha Strazzero-Wilde

Guests: Melissa Makepeace-O'Neil/Select Board member-elect and Kent Whitney

Stein calls the meeting is called to order at 6:06pm.

Huntress presents an update: On 5.20.16 via conference call, Bill Ennen/Mass Technology Collaborative (MTC) Regional Programs Director, listed the six first wave towns: Shutesbury, Wendell, Alford, Otis, Egremont, and Ashfield. Per Ennen, for the first step, a small MBI team will meet with each of the six towns to complete the readiness profiles; MBI has asked that these initial meetings be kept small therefore Strazzero-Wilde and herself will meet with the team on 5.31.16 at 4:00pm. During the conference call, Ennen was asked about regionalization and WW; per Ennen, MBI wants to start the make-ready work right away; towns can have regionalization built into their designs; Ennen wants to see regionalization happen. Regarding the readiness profile, financials will be reviewed – MBI's goal is for towns to have a minimum of 96% total premise coverage – Shutesbury's goal is 100% service to the curb; MBI does not have the whole process laid out – they will be going step by step. The MBI team will include Cynthia Gaines/GIS Manager, Dave Charbonneau/Technical Director, and Sean Cunningham/MTC MBI Project Manager Division of Local Services, Katie Stoico/MBI Executive Assistant and two unnamed others. Herself and Strazzero-Wilde cannot see a downside to meeting with MBI.

Stein: did Ennen talk about the cooperative aspect? Strazzero-Wilde: Ennen did talk about collective bargaining; the purpose of WW is not lost on him. Schmidt: regionalization could be as simple as Shutesbury connecting with Wendell and Leverett. DeChiara: if MBI is acknowledging regionalization, then we can back into a regional model; there needs to be a discussion about regionalization while the other work is being done. Martin: regionalization does not need to be contiguous; Ennen allowed the Rowe meeting to be recorded and it is available to listen to. Huntress: Ennen's messaging seems to be consistent at this point. Martin: I am preliminarily optimistic. Strazzero-Wilde: Ennen is based in Shelburne and recognizes that the needs of Western Mass cannot be managed from Boston. Huntress: Ennen does not have Broadband where he lives. Hall appreciates the option to regionalize later. Vinskey: if these six towns start working on their independent systems, what about WW's economy of scale? Martin: Shutesbury will benefit because MBI is doing the build. Huntress: in MBI's model, each town is a stand-alone so we will lose some of the WW proposed shared costs; at this point, my sense is that MBI will not support collective ownership. Vinskey asks about the status of the RFP. Sephton: it is now moot. Vinskey: would Shutesbury pay for a design to compare to MBI's? Huntress: we could hire a designer to take a look at MBI's design. Sephton states

he is sure that, for six towns, MBI will come up with a competent design; we will want to critique the design, as we know from Leverett what we do not want to happen. Vinskey: is there enough confidence within the Broadband Committee to review MBI's design and if not, where will the funds come from to hire a reviewer? Vinskey: there will be a special town meeting coming up and such a funding request could be on the warrant. Martin: we need to leave this on the table – it will be harder for MBI to dismiss a professional review. Sephton: such a review will cost ~ \$20,000. Martin: it remains to be seen if MBI will lock us into the MassBroadband123 network for a long time. Schmidt: there will be questions as we move forward with MBI. Sephton: there is value in letting MBI spend the funds on the design; does not imagine MBI will not let the town have a say in the design. DeChiara: the Governor wants MBI to take action. Martin: there is a benefit to having all the field equipment all be alike. Hall: given the diversity of these towns, others could be fine with a design and we may not. Martin: there is one pot of money and if there are overages, we will pay; it is a zero sum game. DeChiara: we have an opportunity as one of the six to set a template; we have a chance to set a standard. Citino: when we see the design we will know whether it needs to be reviewed and if a RFP needs to be issued. Martin again recommends leaving this on the table. Huntress: in preparation for the 5.31.16 meeting, here are the questions so far - how much control do we have, can MBI use what we already have in the design. Sephton: using current generation equipment will be less expensive; MBI will want a hard estimate on their design. Schmidt suggests asking that preliminary stages of the design be presented to the Broadband Committee; notes his concern based on some of the early wire mapping errors evidencing lack of local knowledge, i.e. running lines through the woods. Martin: Rowe was ruthless in their criticism of MBI. Stein: it is a big shift to move our trust to MBI; WW's interest is our interest. Schmidt affirms Stein's observation. Huntress summarizes a quote from Ennen: at the end of the day, there needs to be an organization in Western Mass with governance and structure that is owned and operated by the entities bringing Broadband to their towns; this is going to be a stepwise process with back and forth happening every step along the way. Schmidt: we have already done a lot of work on our pole survey; will it be used? Huntress: we will get to that on 5.31.16. Martin: MBI will need more pole survey detail.

Questions for the 5.31.16 meeting: Citino: what is needed to demonstrate financial readiness; Shutesbury voted to guarantee our 2/3rds. Martin: Shutesbury will fly right through demonstrating our ability to float a bond; we will need to think about how to handle cost overruns. Stocker: we can demonstrate our ability to handle overruns. DeChiara: it will be helpful if MBI pays the cost of determining the legality of Shutesbury's vote. Huntress: yes, because Shutesbury incorporated a regional design in our vote, the legality needs to be demonstrated; the Broadband Committee and Select Board will need to handle public relations around this issue. Vinskey: \$1.7 million was going to be enough to do the project; what cost overruns will there be? Sephton: we will know more about the costs once we have the design. Martin: the Middle-Mile went over budget. Vinskey states his concern that if there are overruns, there will be a need to go back to the town for more money. Sephton assures those present that by building as a stand-alone town, the costs will be more predictable. Stein: any extra costs will be on us. Schmidt affirms this. Torres: an area of real concern is that MBI based their costs on a profile of 700 premises versus the actual 800+ households the WW costs are based on;

with WW, we could make up the difference with cost sharing; we will need to carefully oversee costs. Vinskey to Huntress: a major input is that Shutesbury only has \$1.7million. Huntress: the question to MBI is how cost overruns will be mitigated; one of the things the MBI design includes is service to every home not just to the curb; when we initially scoped this out, our estimate was between \$2.5 and \$3million; MBI's estimate is \$2.6million. Hall is concerned about how much of the MBI fund pool will be left. Huntress: will Shutesbury get our full allocation is a question for 5.31.16. DeChiara: we need to advocate for others to get their whole allocation. Martin, regarding cost overruns: if MBI estimates are for "to the home", we may make up the difference by charging "from the pole". Torres: during the recent WW Board meeting, she learned that Windsor and Charlemont also met with Ennen; towns are concerned about not passing the readiness test –what relationship do we have with the other WW towns – what responsibility do we have to those who are not ready? Stein: could we ask about the other towns on 5.31.16? Martin: the plan is that once the first six are in process, the next six will be started. Torres: if a town like Rowe cannot move forward, others will be left out and may have to accept wireless. DeChiara states he does not want to leave others behind, however, readiness is a reality. Schmidt notes how hard the Shutesbury Broadband Committee has worked. Martin: the more able towns will build first; maybe there will be another funding initiative for the other towns. Torres: because MBI is not allowing a regional structure, they are taking away the underpinning of many towns; we need to continue to acknowledge how much more this model will cost region-wide. Stein: can we cooperatively own the wires? Huntress and Martin: that is not going to happen. Schmidt: he won't be surprised, if in fact, it ends up costing more. Martin: our survey will be valuable as there are some issues, i.e. those with direct bury. Sephton: this is why we need to be at the table. Stein: we do not want our success to be on the backs of others. Torres: our readiness was matched by the readiness of twenty other towns. DeChiara: the process has to start somewhere; we do need to keep in mind Torres' concerns; if we know ahead of time, we can have a proactive conversation about overages. Stocker: we may have to revote pending the evaluation of the wording in our original vote. Vinskey: people may be concerned that we will need more money; prefers to see if we can avoid this. Martin cautions about being pennywise and pound-foolish. Huntress: we may have other ways to obtain funds, i.e. installation and subscriber fees. Torres: the operational costs for smaller towns will be higher and higher subscriber costs may decrease take rates. DeChiara: solving the operations' problems is a ways out. Torres: one of the most frequently asked questions is "how much is this going to cost me". DeChiara: we need to focus the conversation on planning for the 5.31.16 meeting in order to be as productive as possible; the best thing we can do to help others, is to do the best we can for ourselves. Torres: we need to be cognizant that the debt repayment is not clear. Kent Whitney: as a townsperson, he reviewed the WW financials and found errors. Huntress: Whitney has been invited to be on the financial review team. Huntress: we can help others and ourselves by talking with MBI about why operational regionalization makes sense. Martin: per Ennen, you do not have to be contiguous to regionalize; that does mean we will need to use MBI's backbone. DeChiara: we want to regionalize in the best ways possible. All present agree: no wireless. Martin: regionalization is for failover service; Ennen agrees that a ring structure is smarter.

Huntress reviews questions to be asked on 5.31.16: can we choose our equipment in the field, ask to have concepts of regionalization explained, will you have a third party vet field operations, when will we get a legal decision about our vote, and could our final allocation be reduced or increased due to basis on 700 premises. Whitney: MBI will not want to overrun a pilot; there will need to be a learning curve. Vinskey: it will be more expensive to be the first; why will we need pay for that? Stocker: fewer towns could divide the pot of money. DeChiara: some towns want wireless. Torres: Royalston is currently doing a wireless pilot in one part of their town. Martin: Middlefield is in the “pilot” category to find out if wireless will work; we are in the “first build” category. Schmidt adds a question: we have done a pole survey, while we realize it is not complete, will you take what we have done? DeChiara: are we qualified to offer any in-kind services and is MBI open to this? Schmidt: once there is a go ahead, property owners will have to authorize access to their property, did MBI include this cost in their estimate and, if not, this is something our committee could do – we are a committee that has a lot of engagement with our town. Huntress: we could link this to our pole survey data. Stocker: we could find 20-30 people willing to assist with this activity. Huntress agrees: this is an activity our committee could take on. Torres: when Leverett did their build, they had the parties involved at their meetings, how hands on will MBI be? Sephton: the question is, how will project management be handled? Torres: how will we be involved in that process? Huntress: if MBI is not going to, we can create a template to help our neighbors. DeChiara: presumably, we will have better access because Ennen is local; perhaps we will have six town meetings. Torres suggests, subsequent to 5.31.16, a second MBI meeting in Shutesbury with the whole Broadband Committee and town leadership. Huntress: by summer, MBI wants to have the readiness profiles for all six towns complete. DeChiara: a six town meeting will be a benefit if we need to pushback. Martin: the six towns may want to strategize on our own. Schmidt explains concierge lawyering. Martin: Rowe is concerned MBI will funnel Crocker; Ennen will not be involved in funneling a specific company.

Huntress: next steps – she will type up the questions and send them to all along with the A-2 WW document.

Martins summarizes the 5.21.16 “A-2 Task-force Recommendation to WiredWest Board of Directors” document utilizing his diagrammatic explanation. Stocker: the Select Board would have to decide if they want to be the MLP. Torres: a MLP could be elected.

Huntress: the Broadband Committee will keep working on the MLP manager and WW delegate job descriptions and figure out a town-messaging plan to announce that Shutesbury has been chosen to be in the first wave of installations. Huntress acknowledges that the job descriptions will most likely not be ready for 5.31.16 Select Board meeting.

Stein adjourns the Select Board meeting at 7:52pm.

Documents and Other Items Used at the Meeting:

1. A2 Task-force Recommendations to WiredWest BOD – rev 5.21.16

Respectfully submitted,
Linda Avis Scott
Administrative Secretary