

Plainfield Broadband Committee
Meeting Minutes January 23, 2017

Committee Members Present: Kimberly Longey, David Kramer, Leslie Rule and Lew Robbins.

Committee Members Absent: Brian Hawthorne, Michal Lumsden, Sally Silberberg

Kimberly called the meeting to order at 7:10 p.m. at Town Hall.

Kimberly reviewed the agenda and asked for additions or changes, of which there were none.

The committee agreed to defer approval of the January 9, 2017 meeting minutes until next meeting, when the minutes will be completed.

WiredWest update: Leslie reported on recent developments within WiredWest. The WiredWest board met on January 16. There are 27 towns active as members of WiredWest and interested in participating in a regional solution for broadband network operations. There are now two viable vendors under consideration by WiredWest for services. More details will be available at the January 28 public presentation to be held in Florence. Leslie reported that she and Howard Bronstein will plan to attend that meeting.

MBI update: Kimberly reported on the status of the December 23, 2016 “readiness” submission by Plainfield to MBI. We are now 100% through MBI’s “readiness” determination process. We received the bond counsel green light letter in December. We received the Division of Local Services green light letter on January 10th. Based on the sustainability spreadsheet, and many rounds of review and revisions, it is estimated that monthly subscriber costs for a Plainfield only (not regional) municipal broadband network will be approximately \$77 (based on 217 potential subscribers, 70% take rate, and single tier of internet service (no phone or t.v.)). Costs are projected to decrease by about a dollar over the first five years as take rate increases. These numbers are purely estimates and the sustainability worksheet process is/was designed to compare to what people are paying for service now. These costs do NOT include estimated increases to property tax bills, which could - per Lew’s fall 2016 calculations – add \$500+ per year for average household or \$2+/- to the tax rate (context is that the broadband committee, finance committee have recommended that the depreciation/replacement reserve costs be covered by taxpayers, not subscribers, as the infrastructure benefits the whole town, including current and future residents).

Completion of the “readiness process” means that we can proceed to the pole survey work, which is a precursor to network design and construction. This process will be done with support from MBI technical staff and requires payment of fees to the owners of the poles (Eversource and Verizon). We need to wait until snow melt for this work to proceed. We will likely need support from Paula King on this next phase of work.

Kimberly reported that MBI is hosting a procurement workshop for municipal officials on Friday January 27 in Worthington. Lew Robbins, Brian Hawthorne and Howard Bronstein plan to attend.

Kimberly reported that MBI is hosting a meeting on February 16 to receive public comment on the results of RFP for Last Mile Grants to Provide Broadband Service to Unserved Towns in Western Massachusetts. MBI released the responses to that RFP today. Preliminary review of that information indicates that very few respondents included Plainfield in their proposals. Crocker Communication and Westfield Gas and Electric/Whip City Fiber may be options for our town to consider. MBI has requested that attendees at the February 16 meeting RSVP and has noted that speaking slots will be limited. Kimberly noted she had communicated with Ed Donnelly, MBI deputy director, already to indicate that at least two representatives from Plainfield will attend. Kimberly requested that committee members honor the established MBI liaison system, and route communication to MBI through her.

Kimberly reported that MBI, in cooperation with the Massachusetts Department of Telecommunications and Cable has petitioned the Federal Communications Commission to release Connect America Funding (CAF) to the states. This effort piggybacks on a similar effort initiated by the state of New York. It is unclear how this action will impact the last mile projects in Western Massachusetts and this action was not included in Peter Larkin's recent update.

Kimberly will set up a meeting with Bill Ennen to address continued questions about MBI's process and progress.

FY 2018 Budget: Lew walked committee members through his projections for broadband expenditures in fiscal year 2018 and invited committee input. After lengthy discussion about assumptions, methodology, and accuracy of estimates, including treatment of capital costs and operating costs of the project, the committee agree to recommend a request of up to \$30,000 for Plainfield's broadband network start-up costs and an additional \$1,000 for the town's dues to WiredWest.

Kimberly noted that the Town of Ashfield Finance Committee chair may prove to be a resource to help us with our financial planning. Kimberly will provide his contact information to Lew and Lew will follow up.

Minutes above as approved at the February 13, 2017 meeting.