

**Plainfield Broadband Committee**  
Meeting Minutes February 27, 2017

Committee Members Present: Kimberly Longey, Leslie Rule, Brian Hawthorne, Michal Lumsden

Committee Members Absent: David Kramer, Sally Silberberg

Members of the public present: Lew Robbins, Sylvane Stockwell

Brian called the meeting to order at 7:06 p.m. at Town Hall.

New Committee Member

Sylvane said she's interested in serving on the committee, but Rebecca Coletta has already submitted a letter of interest to the select board. Brian moved that the committee recommend that the select board appoint Sylvane as an alternate. Kimberly seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

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

Kimberly moved to accept the minutes of the February 13, 2017, meeting as presented; Leslie seconded; passed unanimously

Kimberly moved to thank Lew for hard work on the committee; Michal seconded; passed unanimously. Lew said he would continue to be involved.

MBI Update

Brian recapped the hearing in Worthington on Feb. 16. Kimberly has had extensive conversations with Stan Rosenberg (Senate president) and Steve Kulik (chair of House Ways and Means). Steve said that the optimism of last May (when Gov. Baker rolled out new plan for MBI) had waned significantly. This morning the western MA legislative delegation met and agreed that they will recommend significant changes to the structure and purpose of MBI. Steve told Kimberly that this proposal will likely be accepted readily and quickly, and added that this movement is largely a result of all the testimony that has come in over the last two weeks to Carolyn Kirk and up to Gov. Baker. Kimberly asked Steve what we could do to help; he said the delegation is already pretty much in consensus.

Kimberly said all the recommendations we made to the selectboard two weeks ago still stand. Leslie asked if MBI and other state personnel are now OK with a regional approach. Kimberly said yes, at today's MBI meeting there was a lot of positive talk about regionalization — even if we don't do the entire project as a regional partnership, we could do parts of it together and parts on our own.

Westfield Gas & Electric will essentially be our engineer. They will work on doing procurement estimates and bids. Sylvane will also get her own numbers/estimates from engineers she's worked with before. That will give us a sense of comparison. Brian said most of the poles are on town-owned land; poles themselves are owned by phone and/or electric company. Sylvane asked about running at least some of the wire underground. Brian said we will look at that possibility in our design and engineering phase.

#### Westfield Gas & Electric Update

Meeting March 6 @ 6:30 p.m. in Charlemont with principles from WG&E and northern tier towns. Brian said we shouldn't have a quorum. Brian, Michal, and Leslie will attend from the committee; Lew will also attend as the chair of the finance committee. Kimberly said she thinks we should do some research on their MLP board and meeting minutes from the last year, just to make sure they are solid.

#### WiredWest Update

Leslie reported on recent developments within WiredWest. David Devore wrote a letter to the Department of Public Utilities asking if it would be possible to lower the 3% depreciation reserve. The DPU said there's nothing in MA law that specifies that fiber/telecomm businesses have to have a 3% depreciation reserve. Lew said his calculations show that would save Plainfield's network about \$35,000 a year; this could shave about \$10/month per subscriber. Lew said the capital proportion (paid by taxpayers) of the total monthly cost would then go from 57% to 46%, and the MLP portion (paid by subscribers) would go from 43% to 54%. Michal asked if NOT setting aside this money for depreciation would be unwise. Sylvane said it's not the norm within the industry.

#### *Municipal Light Plant*

Right now our manager of municipal lights reports to the selectboard in its role as manager of the MLP board. Most towns have a separate board that oversees the MLP. One reason to have a MLP board separate from selectboard is to have people with expertise overseeing the MLP. As we begin actually doing things with the MLP it will require an active manager of municipal lighting who will be self-directed. Kimberly said because we don't know yet the specifics of a possible WGE network, it's probably too early to elect an MLP board. But it's not too early to formalize the MLP manager. Brian said the first step should be putting together a job description. Leslie said there's lots of information on WiredWest website about MLPs and what they do. Kimberly said she will work on putting that together in an outline form for our next meeting so that we can brainstorm together from there. Brian said if we believe we'll need a stipend for the position, now is the time to get that into the FY18 budget request. Brian said we'll also need to start using accounting services, rather than having Paula do the accounting related to broadband/MLP. Kimberly said we can't afford the manager of the MLP to have a volunteer mindset, adding that we need some accountability, and a paycheck (or stipend) is how we'll get that.

Brian said WiredWest is looking for select boards to endorse resolutions. The committee agreed to wait until we meet with representatives from WGE.

Leslie moved to adjourn the meeting; Michal seconded. The meeting adjourned at 8:50 p.m.

Minutes above as approved at the 3/13/2017 meeting.