

Plainfield Broadband Committee Meeting Minutes of March 13, 2017

Committee Members Present: Rebecca Coletta, Brian Hawthorne, David Kramer, Michal Lumsden, Leslie Rule, Sally Silberberg. Absent: Kimberly Longey.

The meeting was called to order at the Plainfield Town Hall by the chair, Brian Hawthorne, at 6:00 p.m. by the town hall clock. The acting secretary, noting that daylight savings time had begun the previous day, let the minutes show that the meeting was in fact called to order at 7:00 p.m.

Brian introduced Rebecca Coletta as a new member of the committee. He then reviewed the agenda and requested approval of the minutes of the committee meeting of February 27, 2017. The minutes were unanimously approved.

Update on Depreciation Reserve

Leslie Rule reported that WiredWest had been informed that towns building broadband networks will not be required to set up a 3% depreciation reserve. The removal of such a requirement will yield a potential reduced outlay of up to \$30,000 annually.

Update on Meeting with Westfield Gas and Electric/Whip City Fiber (WGE/WCF)

The committee discussed an informational meeting that took place on March 6, 2017, in Charlemont, at which representatives of WGE/WCF discussed their proposals to design, engineer, build, and operate fiber-optic networks for towns in western Massachusetts. Seven members from Plainfield attended, representing the finance and broadband committees and the select board. Nine area towns were represented. Those who attended were in agreement that WGE/WCF made a good case for operating in all phases of broadband design and implementation.

In a follow-up, there will be a meeting in Plainfield between WGE/WCF and Plainfield's Municipal Lighting Plant (MLP) manager, Leslie Rule, on Monday, March 20, 2017, 6:30 p.m., at the Plainfield Town Hall. (Meeting was cancelled on 3/18 and WG&E rescheduled for the 3/27 meeting). Other committee members expressed interest in attending.

Update on Meeting between WiredWest and the Massachusetts Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development (EOHED)

Reporting on a meeting between WiredWest and EOHED, Brian said that the professional services portion of the state's grants to towns would, finally, be made available to towns to be used at their discretion. That is, it will likely not be required that towns use those grants to purchase services directly from the Massachusetts Broadband Institute (MBI). It is a possibility that direct grants will

be routed through EOHEd instead of MBI. It was noted that relations between WiredWest and state agencies have greatly improved over the past few months.

Cooperation with Neighboring Towns

There was a discussion concerning efforts at regionalization and cooperation with neighboring towns. It was noted that the Plainfield broadband committee supports working with other towns in creating regional solutions (such as a ring architecture that would provide multiple access points to the Internet as a failsafe against disruption at a single locus of the network). However, we intend to move forward with planning and construction without waiting for towns that may lag behind and will welcome a regional plan if and when such becomes available.

Other Business

There will be a presentation in Plainfield by WiredWest regarding their operations plan on Monday, April 3, 2017. Representatives from neighboring towns will be invited.

The broadband committee has received a copy of a draft letter of recommendation from the MBI technical staff to the MBI board that Plainfield is ready to move forward with its "last mile" implementation. This letter will be the final step in the readiness process.

MLP Manager

The committee discussed a proposed MLP Manager job description submitted by Kimberly Longey (David Kramer was called out to attend a simultaneously occurring meeting of the finance committee, and was absent for much of this discussion. This paragraph edited by Brian Hawthorne.) The committee agreed to recommend that the selectboard adopt a job description for the MLP Manager based on the draft edited by the Broadband Committee, appoint Kimberly as the new MLP Manager, consider appointing an assistant MLP manager, consider a stipend, and retain contract approval authority within the selectboard.

Outreach and advocacy

There was a discussion regarding outreach to the Plainfield community to apprise our citizenry of what has transpired over the past two years since the town approved expenditure on broadband infrastructure. The committee will present public informational meetings on April 20 and 22 and prior to that, send mail to every household in town with an explanation of the current state of affairs and an exhortation to attend one of the upcoming informational meetings.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:26 p.m., upon which the Town Hall clock was set forward an hour to indicate that time.

Submitted by David Kramer, acting secretary

