

Leyden Broadband Committee

Minutes of the Committee Meeting of 10/6/15 7:00 pm

Submitted by Bob Anson

Attendees: Bob Anson, David Curtis, Tom Luck, Jeff Neipp, Bob Ryan, Sheila Hourihan and Al Woodhull.

Minutes from September 8, 2015 accepted and approved.

Old Business: Elect a permanent secretary: Bob Anson was asked to be the permanent secretary. He agreed to do this on a temporary basis.

An update was given by Tom Luck on the 9/17/15 Colrain Selectboard Meeting with Mass Broadband. Tom reported that the Colrain selectboard signed a commitment letter that evening with MBI to have MBI handle the engineering design and build out for their broadband network. It was Tom's understanding that the selectboard hoped that this early commitment to MBI would result in an earlier build out for Colrain over other uncommitted towns. The selectboard felt they had plenty of time in the future to decide whether WW, or some other firm, would service their network.

An update was also given by David Curtis, Tom Luck, Jeff Neipp, Bob Ryan, Sheila Hourihan And Al Woodhull who attended the 9/23/15 meeting with Crocker Communications (Crocker). Per Crocker, in order for Leyden to have an Internet and phone program it would simply require Leyden's Municipal Lighting Plant (MLP) to issue and watch over 2 contracts annually. The first, to hire a service provider (someone similar to Crocker) and the second, to hire a maintenance provider to handle equipment and line-related issues. All of the approximately \$1 million of capital investment would have to be paid for by the Town of Leyden either via an across-the-board tax increase, a subscriber surcharge, or some combination of each. Crocker said that MBI believes strongly that all of the towns currently without Internet service should ultimately end up with direct ownership of their broadband investment. They said that this is a point of conflict between with WW and MBI. Crocker suggested that the committee should wait for the results of an MBI ordered consultant's report from WIPRO Consulting Services on the viability of the WW Business Plan before making any final decision.

WiredWest (WW) currently intends to start paying the towns back for their interest and principal payments starting in its fifth year of operations. WW assumes no payments by the towns in year one as MBI absorbs the cost of pole surveys and engineering design. In years 2 and 3, the town would pay interest only on whatever short term borrowings they had contributed to WW to get the project off the ground.

Bob Ryan pointed out that with Otis having pulled out of WW there are now 31 towns in the WW territory. Per Jim Drawe, President of WW, 17 of these are committed. Jim also said they have \$90,000 in their cash account, which apparently is a result of these commitments. Bob also pointed out that if large towns, such as Otis, drop out of the WW offering, the financials for WW should be redone to reflect the current situation. There was general discussion about the engineering design of the network. WW stated that it makes sense to have "huts" to house the hub (central connection) for multiple towns and this is also apparently a point of contention with MBI.

How to proceed on getting an accurate premises count in Leyden. Bob Ryan distributed current copies of the street listing with homes identified as signed up or not. Street list will be examined for accuracy by Tom Luck and Al Woodhull with the intent of creating a meaningful mailing list.

New Business: Desirability of looking at other WiredWest alternatives. Is WW viable? Other towns looking at Crocker and additional alternatives: Matrix Design Group, Axia Consulting and Great Aux Wireless. Some towns

have already installed mechanisms to bring residents up to at least DSL speed via radio communication. Members will seek input from other towns.

What is the drop dead date for applying for Leyden's \$5,000 grant? Al will look into that. Our feeling was that we would like to make our decision about how to use our grant by the end of November, 2015.

Bond funding for any broadband alternative chosen: Question was asked if our bond can be rolled over each year, enabling lower rates closer to 0.5% rather than 2.5%. The town has in the past used UniBank Fiscal Advisory Services, Inc. (UFASI) as an advisor in the bonding area and the committee might choose to do the same at some point in the future.

Meeting adjourned at 8:50 pm.