

## Wendell Municipal Light Plant (MLP) Board Meeting

Tuesday, February 15, 2024 6:30 pm

### Minutes

**Present:** MLP Board - Robert Heller, Laurie DiDonato, Lou Leelyn ; MLP Manager - Ray DiDonato.  
Meeting called to order 6:32 pm

**Minutes** - Approval of Jan 9th minutes. Laurie made a motion to approve. Robert seconds . Motion passed unanimously.

**RRR** - Ray has communicated the go ahead to begin this work with Whip City. New Salem (NS) is looking to get a digital equity grant to cover these costs and would like us to go in with them. The total estimate came in a little under \$50K so we have it in our budget. We do need to employ fiber from Shutesbury to do this which could be an extra cost of about \$40-50 per mile per month. NS is working with them on this and there will be a contract (indefeasible right of use / IRU) between Shutesbury and NS . We will have to come to an agreement with NS on our share of the cost. The work should be started by mid March and there will need to be an outage during the install. Ray will check in on the progress of IRU.

**Recent Outage** - mouse chewed into MBI connection - both primary and secondary lines, so it undid our redundancy. White mountain looked for mouse, sealed holes and set up traps. It was frustrating that tech support didn't know it was townwide, seems there is a lag time to get notification of a widespread outage.

### MLP Manager report:

Discussed budget for FY25 - see budget spreadsheet [here](#) or attached.

- Routine maintenance - \$20K for last year. We will add \$8,171 to cover moving fiber on poles.
- Ray proposes we bring routine maintenance down and debt payment up. Annual debt service for the town is \$132084. We can expect to get about \$80K from CAF2- so the balance will approx. \$52K.

There was discussion on the possibility of rate drops.

- A Rate drop for internet of \$5 would lower income by \$21,666 annually - this could be accomplished with a reduction of routine maintenance line.
- A rate drop for phone from \$20 down to \$12.95 would lower income by \$13,620 annually.
- ACP - congress may not continue funding. If rate is dropped and MLP subsidizes participants at \$30/month, annual expense would be \$12,960. We will know by April whether or not this will get funded.
- There was concern that we may still have a bad year(s) with weather and need a buffer for emergencies. It was also pointed out that we have insurance with a deductible of \$10K. Each past outage has cost less than \$10K to fix.

- Laurie proposes that we set a stabilization goal that would determine when rate cuts can happen. For example, once we have \$300K in stabilization we can make a cut. It was agreed we will set up a stabilization fund at next town meeting
- Retained earnings just certified are \$293,667
- \$49,000 is our surplus so far this year.
- Backhaul costs will go down after RRR as we will share with New Salem

It was decided we will plan to cover ACP only but if that gets covered through congress we will consider cutting the phone rate. We will meet again in two weeks to finalize this.

**Annual Report** - Ray will start working on it- it is due the 24th.

**Minutes** - Town Clerk asked for information about our minutes. Lou will respond to Anna to answer questions about the Board. New: Send final minutes in PDF form to Robert and Anna.

**Next meeting time** - February 27th, 6:30pm on Zoom.

Meeting adjourned at 7:37pm