

MLP Board Meeting Minutes

August, 23, 2023 - 5:30 P.M.

Present: Roger Fuller, Larry Cervelli, Joe Gazillo, Jeff Frechette, Justin West, MLP Manager, Jack Henry, Associate MLP Manager

Absent: Kady von Schoeler

Public Present: None

The meeting called to order at 5:33 p.m. on August 23, 2023. The minutes of the Thursday May 11, 2023 meeting were approved. Vote: Yea 4, Nay 0, Abstentions 0

Mr. West gave an update on the following new initiatives:

HVAC Backup – the installation of a minisplit HVAC backup system proved invaluable as there was a failure of the main HVAC system on the Saturday of Memorial Day weekend. The minisplit was activated and prevented damage to the equipment in the fiber hut. Also, it made it unnecessary to have an expensive emergency service call.

Geo Cluster Status Report – The Geo Cluster initiative is progressing. Mr. Henry reported that Chesterfield was moved to third place and so we will not come online until October 2023. Mr. Frechette mentioned a make-ready issue in Windsor that may affect the Geo Cluster. Mr. Henry said he would check into it. He reiterated that there should be substantial savings from this program.

Grant Opportunities – Mr. West reported that there is a significant amount of funding for broadband-related initiatives. He asked the board if they wanted to pursue grant funding, and, if so, should we be looking at a grant coordinator for this purpose. Mr. Gazillo opined that a grant opportunity might be beneficial in attracting the 20% who have not subscribed. Mr. Cervelli said that the Town needed an individual who could scan the environment for grant opportunities. Perhaps this could be combined with the MLP grant coordinator. Mr. West asked the board to consider this issue and we would discuss it at the November meeting.

Stipend Policy – Mr. West said that there was no policy in place concerning the stipend for the MLP Manager. He asked the board to consider appointing a sub-committee of the MLP board to set a policy for the stipend for the manager. The manager would then use that same policy in setting the stipend for the assistant and associate MLP managers. Mr. Gazillo said that he would need more data as to the amount of time the duties of the managers took up. Mr. West said he would supply that information. Mr. Frechette asked if there were a possibility of sharing an MLP manager between members of the Geo Cluster. Mr. Henry said that this would be a definite possibility in the future. Mr. Gazillo suggested that there needs to be redundancy in the managers. Mr. West said that both managers could run the MLP, but a transition to a new manager would need attention. The managers are

attempting to make all of the processes of the MLP transparent so that it would be easy for someone to take over if necessary. Mr. Fuller and Mr. Gazillo volunteered for a sub-committee for the purpose of taking up this issue and to report back at the next meeting.

Update on Mount Road Issue – Mr. West reported on a legal issue concerning a resident who has expressed concern that Whip City Fiber, acting as agent for the Town and the MLP, did not have permission to attach fiber to existing poles that cross his property. The matter was referred to the MLP attorney and she wrote a letter indicating that, according to MGL, the owner of a pole has the right to grant attachment rights to a third party.

New Drop Costs – Mr. Henry presented the new costs from Whip City Fiber for new installations. Given that the cost for a basic install of up to 250 feet has gone up from \$1000 to \$1,100, Mr. Gazillo moved that “The MLP Drop Policy be amended to increase the basic subsidy from \$1000 to \$1,100.” The motion carried Yea 4, Nay 0, Abstentions 0.

CAFII Distribution – Mr. Henry indicated that the CAFII program was on track for a distribution to the Town in the first quarter of 2024.

Mr. Henry presented the fiscals for the fourth quarter of FY2023 as well as presenting a comparison of FY2023 to FY2022. In both cases he indicated that the MLP was in sound financial shape and that we could expect retained earnings that will be less than last year, however, they will still be significant.

Mr. West brought up the issue of a possible rate reduction as something that the board might want to take up at the May meeting of 2024, thus giving more time to consider the impact such a move would have on the financial health of the MLP. Mr. Gazillo asked if the board were considering a holiday rate relief as they did last year. Mr. West suggested waiting until we had the figures for retained earnings at the November meeting. Mr. Fuller cautioned that any rate move should be in sync with the other Geo Cluster towns so as not to undercut them. The board agreed.

Mr. West asked Mr. Fuller about the status of the annual an MLP audit and he indicated that he would find that out.

Mr. Gazillo praised the communication of the MLP managers and of the broadband program in general. He said that it affected 80% of the town and good communication was essential. The MLP managers thanked him for his comments.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:58 p.m. by unanimous consent.