

Shutesbury Broadband Committee			
2_17_2021		5:30 PM EST	On Line Zoom Meeting
Facilitator	Gayle Huntress		
Minutes	Jim Hemingway		
Committee Attendees	☒ Gayle Huntress	☒ Jim Hemingway	☒ Craig Martin
	Frank Citino	☒ Steve Schmidt	Ayers Hall
	☒ Graeme Sephton	☒ Eric Stocker	Kent Whitney
Other	Becky Torres, Town Administrator		
Approved minutes for 1/20/2021			

Hut Report: Graeme tested the freeze alarm last week; we will finalize the notification procedure with Crocker this week and a full security test will come the following week. Crocker will call the hut for all visitors entering the hut and record each visit in their log. Too high/too low temperature in the hut will trigger an email message to a group of us, and so we will have to investigate such instances on our own should they happen. Graeme will post some instructions for handling emergencies on the wall of the hut. Much discussion about what to do/who to call if the generator doesn't come on automatically during a power failure, but the consensus was that our contracted electrician should lead any such interventions.

Maintenance and Service: Only 30 interactions/reports last month with only one open report still left to deal with. Detailed invoices from Tri-Wire for the service work they have done in the past have still have not appeared. Discussion about standby fees and billing practices. Tri-Wire is doing the repairs – Sertex is doing the new installations only. Our repair contract is with Crocker – they decide who to call or hire for repairs, and they bill us accordingly. Much discussion about trying to keep the billing current and not months behind so that we can have a more accurate and timely idea of what we are spending on repairs.

Financial Report: Steve reported our current balance is \$178,094, with a bond payment of \$105,675 coming due April 3. Monthly customer fees collected for us by Crocker are keeping in the \$39K range. Steve presented for consideration two possible FY 2022 budget proposals. Both make a significant reduction in the maintenance budget to \$60,000 from the current \$108,500, which was based initially on Leverett's repair budget. To date, FY2021 repair billing is estimated to be around \$45,000, except that it is hard to know how accurate this figure is because the billing for repairs has been so delayed, and we have 4 months remaining in the fiscal year. So far, since December there have not been any service dispatches. He also suggested reducing the emergency reserve from ~\$42K to ~\$22K. Gayle reported no action on Lifeline CAF II expense yet but it still needs to be in the budget. There are also smaller reductions in the manager's stipend overhead costs payable to the town. Town Administrator Torres will provide the correct figures. The difference between the two proposals is the user fees. One proposal leaves the fee unchanged at \$52/month. The other proposal would lower the fee by \$5 to \$47/month which would reduce internet only charges monthly from \$75 to \$70 at current ISP rates. At the higher fee, \$130,000 would be applied towards principal reduction on the BAN due in August. At the reduced fee, \$87,000 would be applied towards the BAN. Torres stated that it is easier to lower a rate than to raise it back up again, and since our ISP contract expires next year, we may need to change our subscriber rates at that point anyway. If the new ISP fees come in higher than the current fees, we could be in the difficult position of having to raise rates after just having reduced them. Jim spoke in favor of retaining the current fee, using the funds to reduce the debt as much as possible now. Steve noted that he projects being able to pay off the BAN part of the total debt in August of 2022 regardless of which monthly fee we choose for next year. The retained earnings from last year of approximately \$123K will also be used to reduce the BAN debt coming due this August. General agreement at the moment is to keep subscriber rates the way they are through FY 2022. Further discussion ensued about our ISP contract with Crocker that expires at the end of Fiscal 2022. We anticipate that RFPs for competitive bids will go out around November 1st, 2021, with responses likely due by early December.

Gayle submitted our proposal for elimination of the surety bond fee(\$7,000) with Verizon, National Grid and Eversource to the Massachusetts Department of Telecommunications and Cable(DTC). It will be 180 days before we get a ruling on the Surety Bond before the DTC. Gayle is investigating the possibility for doing an IT security audit for ShutesburyNET. Hard to know how thorough an audit we should pursue and what we should spend on it.

MLP Governance: Gayle and Steve's terms on the MLP board end this July. Gayle has decided not to run again but to continue in her position as MLP Manager. Graeme and Steve both expressed an interest in running for the two open seats. Steve would be renewing his current position on the MLP board, and Graeme would be rejoining the MLP board on which he has served just a year before. Not sure if signatures are required in the traditional manner as they have been in the past, due to pandemic restrictions. The vote will come this June at our annual Town Meeting.

Brief discussion of the cell tower that will be constructed in Shutesbury by this June and the organization that will be leasing space on this tower – FirstNet, an ATT company, that has created a nationwide network to respond to the needs of first responders. It seems unlikely that they will be connecting to our fiber network, but we will monitor it.

Set Next Meeting	
	Wednesday, March 17, 2021, 5:30pm