

Shutesbury Broadband Committee		
07_17_2024	Noon, DST	On Line Zoom Meeting
Facilitator	Gayle Huntress	
Minutes keeper	Jim Hemingway	
Committee Attendees	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Gayle Huntress <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Jim Hemingway <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Steve Schmidt <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Craig Martin <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Graeme Sephton	
Other	Bobby Liswell (SHELD), Adam St Martin (SHELD), Tim Haas (HG&E), Kelly Frazier (SHELD)	
Approved minutes June 19, 2024		

Our meeting opened with a debrief by our ISP provider’s technical reps about last week’s outage which took place last Thursday, July 11, at 3pm. Initially, HG&E thought that the CrownCastle fiber had been accidentally cut in Springfield, where most of the network equipment is located, but it turned out that the outage was caused by a massive power surge caused by Eversource that knocked out power for most of Springfield including Forest Park. Consequently, extensive damage was done to our ISP’s electronics. The surge was so strong that it disabled two of the three UPS supplies that would have provided uninterruptible backup power to HG&E’s equipment at 1500 Main St. in Springfield. HG&E temporarily re-routed our internet connection to the 1Gb MBI backup connection that we have maintained at 1 Federal St which quickly became overloaded by all the users in Leverett and Shutesbury trying to access the internet. 7 pieces of equipment were disabled/damaged by the surge at 1500 Main St., adding to the difficulty of quickly bringing service back to everyone in both towns. HG&E was able to restore our 10gb service connection by around 5pm that afternoon except for the connection to our phone provider Big River, due to additional damage that was done by the surge to the telephone routers at 1 Federal St. HG&E had to do a flash restore to the one remaining working telephone router which finally got it up and running by around 2:30AM the following morning.

The outage was due to Eversource’s work on their power grid in Springfield and the huge surge it caused which damaged or derailed much of the equipment that HG&E had installed at 1500 Main St., and at 1 Federal St. as well. Thanks to the three UPS backup units, such power outages had been effectively dealt with in the past but not this time due to the intensity of the surge.

Is there any way such a massive failure could be prevented in the future? Was this a one-time event? Should SHELD or HG&E have done anything different?

Gayle and the MLP were also concerned that the outage notice didn’t go initially to our local fire and police officials which we had requested and planned for some time ago should such a town-wide outage take place. Tim Haas from HG&E reported that the problem with both internet and phone was due to equipment failures at 1500 Main St and 1 Federal. Concern was voiced about how important it was to address the phone outage first should such a failure happen again, given the importance of 911 calling to our subscribers, but HG&E assumed that bringing the

CrownCastle internet connection up first would also solve the phone problem. But initially they were unaware of the damage the surge did to the telephone routers at 1 Federal which were finally fixed by re-flashing the memory in the router that connects all of our phone service to Big River. HG&E will prioritize phone issues in the future first and foremost should such an outage occur again.

The guests from SHELD and HG&E left the meeting at 12:30PM. MLP and Broadband committee members continued to discuss network outage and reliability issues.

Gayle will work out some of the details of how HG&E and SHELD should respond to such an outage should anything like this happen in the future. Steve noted the importance of prioritizing repairs to the phone service. In rural towns like Shutesbury, having a working phone service for making emergency calls is particularly important.

Steve questioned if HG&E should have better surge protection at their Springfield facilities. Gayle will bring this up in her follow up discussions with SHELD and HG&E.

Craig continued to express concern about the importance of the phone service and the need for people being able to access 911 in an emergency. Much discussion followed about how the phone system is routed in Springfield and if any changes needed to be made. Can the telephone routers at 1 Federal St. be made more resilient? Gayle was especially concerned about how we notify Fire, Police and our subscribers about such outages. Emergency text messages were not sent out. Graeme wondered if there was a way to send such messages directly from our hut, which was independent of all the trouble in Springfield, should something like this happen again. But installing such a backup for getting out emergency messages from the hut would be both operationally difficult and expensive to implement. Also its usefulness would be limited to rare events like last week.

Hut report: the slamming door issue – Graeme has installed a new, more resilient pad on the door frame to prevent the problem from happening again. He has also improved how the two HVAC units interact with each other in a more reliable way. Both HVAC units seem to be working fine during this particularly hot weather. As it is now, one HVAC in the summertime runs continuously while the other is set up as a backup. This relationship will change in the winter when cooling is not an issue and the use of the two HVAC units can alternate back and forth.

Gayle is still working on the hut door key duplication issue.

39 service tickets in June, four of which were robocalls, repeats or wrong numbers, which is about average for the month. The MLP had our first dig-safe error report a short time ago when a contractor accidentally cut the fiber connection to a subscriber's home on January Hills Road. Fortunately, SHELD happened to be in the neighborhood and was able to fix the problem quickly and efficiently on a temporary basis.

Customarily the MLP's financials are audited every three years at a cost of \$850 a year as allocated in our budget. But due to the size of the grant being given to the town to finance the construction of the new library, Massachusetts requires that the MLP's Enterprise Fund be

audited each year for three years (2023-2025) at a cost of \$4,000 separately for each year, due to the size of the grant that the Town is receiving for the library construction. And so, as it stands now, our normal audit schedule will resume in 2028. The MLP budgets \$850 a year for these audits, but given the fact that this additional audit expense is brought on by the Library construction project, the MLP feels that this additional expense - \$3,600 additional for the next three years - should be borne by the Town and not the MLP. MLP members agreed, and a vote was taken on this issue – Hemingway, aye; Sephton, Aye and Schmidt, aye.

Concerning the Digital Equity Survey sent out last month - over 350 responses have been received to date, way more than one would routinely expect from such a survey, thanks to the loyalty our local subscribers have for the Shutesbury MLP and our fiber network. On Monday, July 29, there will be a public meeting in Leverett to discuss the survey results for both towns. Gayle will attend this meeting via Zoom. How are we going to use the funds that will be granted to us by our participation in this survey? Our subscribers reported that these funds, first of all, should be used to connect the unconnected, and secondly for the purchase and installation of new routers. However, our subscribers were not enthusiastic about paying the additional monthly cost that would come with the installation of managed routers.

Discussion of the year-end final FY 24 fiscal report for the MLP will be put off until our next meeting, by which time Gail Weiss, our Town's accountant, will have all the figures in hand to complete this year end report.

Steve wondered whether we have been monitoring our inventory of spare parts that originally came from Crocker and which is now in SHELD's hands. Currently, the plan is to use up these parts until they are gone and then rely on SHELD's inventory for future needs and repairs. Steve suggested that maybe it would be a good idea to sell our inventory to SHELD rather than try to maintain this arrangement, which would make the bookkeeping a lot easier... a good idea except for the fact that SHELD does not use the pre-connectorized cables that Crocker purchased for us years ago... cables that are a part of this inventory. Graeme pointed out that the pre-connectorizing at the MST end of a drop cable is very cost-effective/reliable and that it is very easy to just cut the cable to the desired length at the NID and splice on a new connector at the premises end.

Meeting concluded at 1:30pm.