

Shutesbury Broadband Committee		
10_16_2024	5:00pm DST	On Line Zoom Meeting
Facilitator	Gayle Huntress	
Minutes keeper	Jim Hemingway	
Committee Attendees	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Gayle Huntress <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Steve Schmidt <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Graeme Sephton	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Jim Hemingway Craig Martin
Other		
Approved minutes September 18, 2024		

Hut Report – not much to report. We had 20 service tickets in September, our lowest ever. Pachoriek, our electrician, will be doing generator maintenance shortly and will also make some adjustments to the time it takes to transfer from National Grid power to generator power and back again during a power outage. Graeme will meet and work with Pachoriek during this service call.

FY 2024 end of year report – Gayle has been working with Gail Weiss on this report and they now both agree on the final result. The report reveals that we are cash positive at the end of FY24 by roughly \$73,000 despite the unexpected cost of transferring our fiber from the old single phase poles over to the new three phase poles which cost us \$188,000 over the last year. Gayle has reached out to Jo Comerford, our State Senator, to see if there are any funds available that could reimburse us for this unexpected expense. Steve is hopeful that Jo Comerford might have the political clout to make this happen, given the fact that National Grid was likely given federal infrastructure funds to complete this project that we should also have equal access to. But our chances for reimbursement are not great. Apart from this expense, the MLP spent \$39,781 on regular maintenance and service calls during FY24. We did, however, have a relatively mild winter, which kept this amount lower than it has been in years past.

Pole rental fees went up significantly in FY24 because it included the previous year rental charges which we had not been billed for until this year. Insurance rates also went up as well which they seem to do every year. Our audit costs have also gone up. Now that we have a more accurate idea of what our share of the audit cost should be, we will raise the fee that we pay to the town to \$2,000 per year in FY26. The Town audit is done every two years, and the current estimate for our share of the audit cost is \$4,000. Gayle will send copies of the FY24 year end report, now completed, to the 3 MLP members.

We are \$30,191 cash positive so far this fiscal year. The Digital Equity Plan has been completed by FRCOG and the next step is to work with MBI on obtaining the grant funds. Gayle is submitting ShutesburyNET for an NDIA award - the National Digital Inclusion Alliance. This would give Shutesbury national recognition for our work.

Steve reported that the interest rate for the money the town borrowed to build our fiber network will remain 1.25% for one more year. In 2026 the rate will increase to 2.00%. Steve also noted that a nearby town recently borrowed funds to purchase a truck and is paying 4.5% interest on the loan.

Ongoing router discussion:

In comparing Leverett and Shutesbury service calls that specifically had to do with router issues, it appears that Leverett had, over the last year, a few more calls than Shutesbury once Gayle analyzed SHELD's records for service calls for the two towns. This difference could be attributed to the fact that, unlike Leverett, Shutesbury provided all of its subscribers with Linksys EA7300 routers. No such uniformity exists for routers in Leverett. This lack of uniformity could also account for an increased number of router service calls initially when Leverett made the switch to SHELD because there were so many different routers in Leverett subscriber's homes, though that discrepancy might also be due to the fact that Leverett utilizes active ethernet connections and Shutesbury does not, which provides a significant difference between how routers connect to their ONTs in both towns.

Discussion about router hardware replacements continued. Gayle would like to enable our subscribers to have an easier and more convenient way to get support for their use of broadband inside their homes. Managed routers would provide better remote support for tasks such as remote password resetting, but it is still unclear how much better they would be overall for user experience. However, managed routers of the sort SHELD could provide would cost a subscriber an additional \$2.50 per month, and the recent survey that was sent out to all Shutesbury subscribers indicated that many were not in favor of paying for this managed service. But they also indicated they do want better remote support. We might be able to offer our subscribers a choice between a managed router or an unmanaged one. The managed router would be the newest commercial Calix router available at the time when this upgrade takes place, and the unmanaged one would be, perhaps, a WiFi 6 version of the Linksys router currently found in Shutesbury households. Graeme feels that most routers degrade modestly over time and should be replaced, perhaps, every 7 years or so. SHELD is willing to support both managed and unmanaged routers when the time comes to replace our current flock of EA7300/EA7500 Linksys routers. Gayle estimates that the cost for replacing all of our Linksys routers in Shutesbury would be approximately \$209,000, though that estimate is likely to rise over the next few years. We currently have approximately \$254,000 in our depreciation account which is meant to cover replacement of the equipment in the hut, as well as distribution equipment upgrades and potentially all of the in-home electronics for all subscribers. We will continue researching and exploring router hardware upgrade options.

Meeting ended at 6:23pm