

Shutesbury Broadband Committee		
3_19_2025	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 Graeme Sephton	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Jim Hemingway <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Craig Martin
Other		
Approved minutes February 12, 2025		

No problems at the hut. Gayle did replace the battery in the SimpliSafe door lock, but apart from that, all is well at the hut – There were only 19 repair tickets last month, few of which were technical.

Finances: The MLP is \$36,058 in the black which is about normal for this time of year.

Gayle has been working on the Digital Equity Grant we hope to receive – an enormous task with lots of paperwork. Gayle hopes to have it ready to submit by the end of the month. The grant application also includes letters of support from various town officials which will document the needs they have for various enhancements they and the MLP hope to make for broadband service in our community. Once the paperwork is completed, Gayle hopes to be able to send it out to the MBI (Massachusetts Broadband Institute) early next month.

Donna McNichol, the Town of Shutesbury's lawyer, is reviewing our proposed new contract with SHELd, our ISP. The contract is very similar to the one we signed three years ago, the only difference being the dollar amounts for the ISP service they will be providing beginning this coming August. Gayle hopes to get the contract signed once Donna has reviewed it by the end of this month.,

Gayle plans on attending the Digital Alliance forum in Florence tomorrow. She will be talking about the process of estimating the costs and challenges for building a fiber network based on her extensive experience for building the fiber network in Shutesbury.

Gayle will also be working on recruiting new members for the MLP in the coming years, during which Graeme and Jim may be stepping back from their membership in the Shutesbury MLP once their current terms expire.

There was a discussion about raising the amount that the MLP provides for those subscribers who need financial assistance. Everyone agreed that raising the current subsidy from \$15 to \$18 would be appropriate, a 9% increase, beginning this coming August. Currently, there are 20

subscribers who qualify to receive this support from the MLP, the requirement for which is that they have applied for and currently receive Lifeline support (\$9.95 a month) from Whip City Fiber. The MLP currently has \$5,000 in its budget to provide such additional financial assistance. Depending on how many subscribers apply for and receive this support, the MLP might be able to increase it in the future. Details about how to apply for this support will be included in the newsletter Gayle will be sending out this June to all subscribers that will also include information about the \$6 rate increase for broadband service this coming August.

With all the turmoil in Washington these days, it is reasonable to worry if any of the BEAD (Digital Equity) money might be clawed back by the Federal Government and redirected to some other provider, like StarLink, for example, or someone else. Hard to say if the digital equity funding we hope to receive sometime soon will remain intact, but we will remain on the alert. Our operations budget does not depend on any of these funds.

Gayle also noted that any new competition for our broadband service is highly unlikely, given the fact that, despite the construction of the new ATT cell tower in the central part of Shutesbury, no one has dropped their fiber phone service as a result, even though everyone around Lake Wyola currently has cell service that they never had before.

A vote was taken to re-nominate Gayle as MLP manager for the FY26 fiscal year... Schmidt, aye; Hemingway, aye, with enthusiastic additional support from Craig Martin and Graeme Sephton, whose voice, I think, could be heard even from as far away as Australia where he is vacationing.

If the ATM (Annual Town Meeting) is moved to the end of May, Steve will most likely present the FY26 MLP budget to be voted on by town voters instead of Gayle, who will be busy that weekend moving from one location to another.

Meeting adjourned at 5:45pm.