

Shutesbury Broadband Committee		
4_16_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"/> Jim Hemingway
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Steve Schmidt	Craig Martin
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Graeme Sephton	
Other		
Approved minutes March 19, 2025		

Hut Report: All seems to be well in the hut. SHELD has a new service ticket system that gives a more immediate view of what is happening with the service calls that they are making. This allows Gayle to have close to real time access to these service calls on a day-to-day basis.

Graeme commented about a recent fire caused by a downed high voltage line on land just off of Wendell Road which fortunately did not damage our fiber network.

Maintenance – 26 tickets last month, no significant issues to report.

Financials – we are positive by about \$67,000 according to the most recent revenue report received from Gail Weiss, the Town’s accountant, most of which would have been used to service our debt payment in early April. We receive roughly \$30,000 every month from SHELD, 6 payments of which we have been notified about so far in FY2025 according to the current revenue report that Gayle has received from the Town. There is an information lag of close to three months, and so it is very difficult to get a more up-to-date picture of our financial situation since Gayle can only request this information once every three months. However, there are some changes coming soon that will likely speed up this flow of financial information to Gayle and the MLP as well as to Shutesbury residents once the Town accountant posts more of this information on the Town’s website. Gayle will request real-time read-only access from our town accountant.

Steve was concerned about our retained earnings from FY24 and the size of our Emergency Reserve account into which these earnings will flow once it is voted on at our Annual Town Meeting at the end of May. Steve will be presenting our FY26 budget at our ATM this year which Gayle will not be able to attend. Not surprisingly, Steve was concerned about the delay that Gayle has been experiencing with the revenue reports from the Town because not having a current picture of our finances will make his presentation of our budget and our warrant articles much more challenging should questions arise. Gayle will work with Steve later on this month to provide him with what he needs to know before he addresses Shutesbury voters at our upcoming Annual Town Meeting.

The new ShutesburyNET contract with SHELD for the next three years beginning this August has been signed and approved by all concerned. Gayle will update our broadband subscribers this June with a newsletter that will cover many MLP topics, including the \$6 per month increase in ShutesburyNET's monthly subscription fee beginning this August.

The Digital Equity grant that Gayle has been working on for some time is a very complex, difficult and time consuming document to assemble, and Gayle has several questions about it that she is hoping the MBI will answer. Gayle hopes that some of the administrative costs of putting together this grant proposal can be paid for out of the grant once it is awarded to ShutesburyNET.

Gayle would like to collect the names of some of the prospective candidates who might be interested in joining the MLP once Graeme's term is up at the end of FY26.

Backhaul: Shutesbury subscribers use about 3-4 gigs on average during the peak usage hours. We currently have a 1 gig backup should our backhaul connection with CrownCastle fail. Should this happen, our fiber network would only be able to handle phone service with Big River and not much else. Upgrading our MBI backup from 1 to 5gb would cost an extra \$625 a month. Is this additional expense worth it? We have yet to make any use of this 1 gig backup even during our most recent outage last July when an electrical substation failure in Springfield took down our network for over two hours, a serious outage during which our backup failed to work, which made the MLP wonder if paying an additional \$625 a month would be worth the extra cost. Gayle and the MLP would like to see a test of the backup system done to assure us that the backup system actually works as promised. Gayle will talk to SHELD and HG&E about setting up such a test in ways that will not be that expensive to conduct. The MLP is not inclined to invest an additional \$625 a month at this time without knowing if the MBI backup will actually work as promised. In addition, the cost of backhaul from MBI or other suppliers is likely to decrease in the months to come due to increased competition from other potential backhaul providers. Although there is a possibility that we could share some of this emergency backhaul capacity and expense with Leverett, we would have to install \$10,000 worth of equipment to do so, which seems to be too costly and unrealistic at this time.

At the Digital Alliance forum in Florence last month, Gayle was asked to speak about building a municipal fiber network about which she knows a great deal, thanks to her many years of service and participation in ShutesburyNET. 60 people were in attendance at this forum. Hadley seems to likely to be the next town to consider building a fiber network for their residents possibly in the near future.

Meeting adjourned at 5:55pm.