

Shutesbury Broadband Committee		
8_20_2025	5:00pm DST	On Line Zoom Meeting
Facilitator	Gayle Huntress	
Minutes keeper	Jim Hemingway	
Committee Attendees	☒ Gayle Huntress	☒ Jim Hemingway
	☒ Steve Schmidt	☒ Craig Martin
	Graeme Sephton	
Other		
Approved minutes July 9, 2025		

Hut Report – little to report since last time – The Shutesbury Buildings Committee asked a few questions about the hut and Gayle explained to them the agreement we have with the town for sharing the cost of the utilities.

Backhaul testing went well yesterday morning. Of primary concern was the ability of the equipment in our hut to switch over to our MBI backup immediately without any delay should our main connection with Crown Castle fail. There were other aspects to the tests yesterday that SHELd will report to us in more detail in the next week or so, but overall the test was a success.

Spare fiber in the West Pelham Rd area. is now all used up, and Gayle is about to start the process of purchasing another 1:32 splitter, similar to the one that is on a pole next to the State Park beach at the northern end of Lake Wyola. Getting quotes and ordering the components are both a lengthy process that Gayle wants to get started on right away. She also has some concern as to whether we have enough capacity given the recent changes in the State having to do with lot development by being able to split building lots into two and Accessory Dwelling Unit laws. We may have to increase our capacity in town if these zoning building lot changes lead to more local development. This may take a while since the Planning Board has yet to dive into this issue, let alone approve of it. Steve thought that there were other issues regarding development, e.g. water and septic issues, that would make any additional development highly improbable. We will continue to monitor development and scale as needed with additional fiber distribution boxes.

We have \$117K in retained earnings for 2025. We did get more grant monies this year which helped. These will not be matched in FY 2026. These grant earnings are kept in a separate account and do not require a Town vote for us to use them.

Bobby Liswell is retiring from SHELd. Adam St. Martin will replace him.

Gayle just found out a week ago that we have indeed been awarded the digital equity grant that she applied for some time ago despite the fact that she had been told repeatedly up to now that the grant money was no longer available. And so we will be able to fund some of the projects we proposed such as WiFi for the Library from this \$55K grant that seemed to be out of reach just a short time ago. Craig reported that there has been much confusion about grant funding overall within U-Mass as well. The grant funds will be available until June, 2026, and so Gayle and the MLP will have to move quickly. Increased costs for equipment due to inflation and tariffs may make this grant difficult to administer, let alone pay for, in the months to come, because the details she submitted about costs and labor will have changed significantly since she submitted the paperwork for the grant. Gayle hopes that the enhanced tech support from the grant can be done by SHELd as opposed to a different contractor, at least until the funds that are earmarked for that part of the grant run out. Steve thought it might be a good idea to see how Leverett handles subscriber tech issues of this sort. When a subscriber in Leverett needs tech support of the kind we hope our grant could pay for, Leverett's network manager – Margie McGuinness - refers them to a local electrician who handles such calls at the subscriber's expense. Gayle, however, favors using SHELd for such calls rather than an independent contractor since our relationship with SHELd is already well established. Using SHELd has significant advantages as opposed to us hiring another vendor.

The discussion about whether we should replace our current Linksys routers with managed or unmanaged routers will continue. Replacing all the routers in the homes of our subscribers in Shutesbury will be a challenging task not only for the MLP to pay for but to administer.

Gayle will notify those residents in Shutesbury who are still unconnected to our network that this will be their last chance to get fiber installed to their homes free of charge for those with financial need.

SHELd doesn't want to become involved in security issues and block content to their subscribers. Ubiquiti routers will be installed in the new Library and Ubiquiti offers protection with their routers that might be able to help with maintaining the public network security issue. If such a service appears to work well in the new Library, Gayle thought we might be able to extend this public network feature to the Town Hall as well by means of the use of a short dark fiber connection.

Meeting concluded at roughly 6pm.

Next meeting Sept 17.