

New Ashford Select Board Meeting
March 20, 2017

Board Present: Jason Jayko (chair), Ken McInerney, Mark Phelps

Others Present: Keith LaCasse, Lori Jayko, Wayne Buckley, Kurt Singer, Bill Stathis

Meeting opened at 6:00

1. Tax Collector Interview: Kurt Singer expressed interest in the Tax Collector position. Amy Kohlenberger called in to explain the position and answer questions. Kurt explained that he is eager to help the town. He has much experience with documentation and using spreadsheets. He is very organized and will be able to work easily with Michelle Singer, Town Accountant. Kurt has a laptop from the town for his Police Chief duties.

2. Crocker Communications: Bill Stathis, representative from Crocker communications, explained where Crocker is in the revised RFP process. The RFP was submitted in conjunction with Fujitsu, a network design group that is not an internet service provider. He met with Tim Conley, Executive Director of Massachusetts Technology Collaborative, and Peter Larkin. This RFP specifically asked the private sector to own and operate the network, and fix it when it breaks, upgrade it, and repay debt services. (No town borrowing, bond attorney, annual audits, town ownership.) Crocker has identified twenty towns, we are the fourth visited. If the town allows Crocker its MBI money for the build, the make ready work will begin this summer and homes will be connected by next summer. Most pole to residence distance will be fully covered; trenching would be the homeowner's expense but Crocker can use existing conduit. The town will receive a buy-out option (should Crocker go bankrupt, or if the town doesn't like the way things are going).

Crocker believes they have the quality control and training mechanisms in place to handle the new growth and that new hiring will be local. They will do as many build outs as they can at once. There may be a few months between all houses being hooked up. They have been operating in Leverett for two years with 100% coverage and an over 80% take rate. The per household cost for unlimited internet is \$25 a month for a gigabit fully symmetrical speed, no caps; \$15 unlimited local and long distance phone calling; \$60-\$80 is for network operation, repairs, pole licenses, and debt pay back. Rate fix will likely be three years. Connection fee TBD based on the amount of money received by MBI and Crocker's borrowing. There's no service set-up fee.

If power goes out, Crocker will have pedestals with cabinets with hook ups for generators, which can run a minimum 12 hours and a maximum of 24 hours. George Propane will house and drive the generators to sites within 4-8 hours. Homes' power supply will have a UPS with an 8 hour battery life if not in use. The battery lasts about an hour with constant use. Crocker will have at least two bucket truck companies on retainer for larger problems such as trees down and power outages.

Crocker can bring back a concrete proposal once they know MBI's commitment. MBI is requesting no take rate threshold. Crocker is not considering wireless at the time.

3. Road Commissioner: Keith LaCasse, there was a lot of snow clean-up during the recent storm. There were no reports of trees down. Wayne Buckley, Fire Chief, thanked Keith for a good job plowing the fire station. Mark thanked Keith for patching the potholes on Smith Road. The town has about 75-100 tons of salt left. There is a lot of sand.

4. Broadband: Jason and Ken attended the last Wired West meeting. Their time frame is unclear.

Would Crocker's equipment have a personal property tax?

MBI will have a schedule for the pole survey by the end of this week.

5. Budget: Ken has updated the budget. Jason will check to see if there is version control with Google Doc. Does the election account need \$3000? FY18 budget is up \$84,000. The board will go through the budget at the next meeting.

Public Comment and Any Other Subjects for Consideration:

Are/or can rental properties/houses be taxed at a commercial rate? Ken will ask Gus.

Dick George might be interested in taking over as the head of the Board of Health.

Jason got an email from Colonial Power. They have heard back from the DOER, and the legal review is complete. Tuesday March 28th there will be a conference call with three other municipalities.

Colonial also sent an e-mail containing the petition for the aggregation plan for the Town of New Ashford. Mark made a motion that the chair sign the petition, seconded by Ken.

Eversource called the board, asking for support for their legislation for a rate increase.

Wayne brought the mutual aid agreement from the counties and states for the board to sign. Ken made a motion to sign the Fire Department's aid to other municipalities, seconded by Mark.

Ken expressed concern with the fire department's response time to the brush fire on Beach Hill Road. Wayne explained how the 911 call gets routed. Ken will write a thank you letter to the Lanesboro Fire Chief for their aid.

Approve the minutes from March 9, 2017. On a motion by Mark, seconded by Jason, the minutes were approved.

The warrant was reviewed and signed.

Next meeting April 3, 2017 at 6:30

Meeting adjourned at 8:29