

New Ashford Select Board/MLP Meeting

New Ashford Town Hall/Zoom

November 6, 2023

Board Present: Jason Jayko (Chair), Ken McInerney (MLP Manager), Mark Phelps

Others Present: Lori Jayko, Susan Supranowicz, Ed Grosso, Cindy Grosso, Richard George, Andrew Short, Keith Lacasse, Diane George

Zoom: None

Meeting opened at 6:00

1. Approval of Minutes from October 16 and October 24: On a motion by Mark, seconded by Jason, the minutes from the October 16, 2023 New Ashford Select Board/MLP meeting were approved. Ken abstained. On a motion by Mark, seconded by Ken, the minutes from the October 24, 2023 New Ashford Select Board/MLP meeting were approved unanimously.

2. Whip City: Andrew Short from Whip City provided an informational packet showing that New Ashford has 98 active subscribers in the MLP. The majority of installations were done in 2020 and tailed off in 2023. Whip City can help market to new construction or to households that aren't subscribing. The monthly revenue of the MLP is an average of \$8,500 - \$9,000. Out of that, Whip City charges the MLP around \$5,000 per month. This year the town entered into a new ten-year agreement, which lowered the rate. Ooma's federal taxes went up, so phone bills went up \$2-\$3. Verizon is increasing their pole attachment fee. The MLP has \$720 in outstanding user fees over 90 days past due. Whip City is administering the federal grant for the Connect America Fund. The town has met the grant requirement of having fiber pass by 95% of the homes that were eligible. In the first quarter of next year, the town will receive \$43,000 that will go through the free cash audit. There is legislation in the works to get rid of the free cash audit requirement. CAF II funds will be dispersed annually for ten years. In years 2-10, the town will get \$14,400 each year.

The Board has noticed a degradation of speed on some days that has been happening for months. They would like Whip City to pinpoint where the problem is emanating from. The Board reviewed usage/speed reports with Andrew. He will have Whip City determine the IP address causing the problem and will let the MLP know.

He will let the MLP know how many stamper boxes are currently being tested and will get the MLP more information on the repairs to 259 New Ashford Road. The new customer policy, of customers paying first and last month when they subscribe, is in place. Andrew will verify that the seasonal reconnection fee has been changed from \$100 to \$50.

3. Public Comment: Ed Grosso gave an update on the Historical Commission's repairs on the Old Schoolhouse. Volunteers repaired the window glazing, painted the green trim, touched up the white paint, painted the bell tower white, readjusted the front door lock, and repaired the back door lock. The Commission thanked Bob Lyon for his time painting and the other volunteers that were willing to help. The town will send Bob a thank you letter. The Commission thanked the Fire Department for the loan of a roof ladder. Free Cash was certified \$693,510 for the General Fund and \$84,170 for the MLP Enterprise. Susan will remind businesses that liquor license renewal is coming up.

4. Road Commissioner: Condron paved in two places on Mallery Road, near the salt shed, and the bridge near Roys Road. Keith requests that residents do not blow leaves and lawn clippings in the road.

5. Church: The paperwork is done. We need to get the keys, change the locks, transfer electrical service to the town, and add it to insurance. Jason will check to see who owns the propane tank.

6. Fire Station Addition: Jason posted the specifications on Commbuys and has answered some inquiries. Bids are due by December 1.

7. Town Purchasing – Credit Card: Purchases made with the town credit card need to be pre-approved by the Finance Committee. Jason has financial policies from Berkshire Regional Purchasing. The Board thinks there should be one card. Mark made a motion to submit the application for one card for the Town Treasurer, seconded by Ken.

8. Old and Any Other Business: The board reviewed a plan proposed by Steve Nielsen for the Old Schoolhouse property boundary. Cindy and Ed Grosso will look for information at the registry of school buildings and the Board will discuss at the next meeting. Shaun Garvey wants to know the town's right of way on town roads. Ken contacted Mass Highway and looked the deeds, but did not find any information. Ken advised Shaun to look at his plot plan. MassDOT says municipalities can trim anything that is hanging into the right of way of town roads. Setbacks are in the zoning bylaws.

9. Warrant: The warrant was reviewed and signed.

Next meeting November 20, 2023 at 6:30

Meeting adjourned at 7:23