

Town of Becket
Board of Selectmen Meeting Minutes
1:00 p.m., September 21, 2018
Town Hall, 557 Main Street, Becket

Attendees

Board of Selectmen: William Elovirta, *Chairperson*; Nicole Ledoux, *Vice Chairperson* & Michael Lavery, *Clerk*

Staff: Robert Markel, *Interim Town Administrator*; Beverly Gilbert, *Administrative Assistant*

Broadband Ad Hoc Group: Bob Gross, Jeremy Dunn, Chuck Garman & Dan Parnell,
David Labrecque **Absent:** John Les

Others Present: Chris Lynch (Matrix), Bob Haber (remote participation), Bill Ennen (EOHEC – Last Mile Liaison), Jim Drawe (Cummington)

1. Call to order

Bill called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m. He indicated that the BOS was recording the meeting.

2. Discuss Mass. Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development funding

Bill Ennen entertained questions about the summary handout he provided regarding Mass. Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development Funding. He explained that after he and other EOHEC officials review invoices/reports to submit to the Secretary of Economic Development for payment authorization, it is the Secretary of Economic Development who ultimately determines whether items submitted fall under the state's funding guidelines. Discussion ensued about underground utilities in private communities/homes as well as in the 4 Massachusetts Pike crossings. Bill Ennen stated that generally the state will fund make-ready on licensed utility poles on streets that service more than one subscriber. Discussion ensued about allowable make-ready. Bill Ennen does not believe that the state's last mile funds will allow underground expenses for underground in private communities nor does he think privately owned poles or streets servicing only one home will be covered.

Bill Ennen advised that it is the state's understanding that Becket will build its own network by using Westfield Gas & Electric ("WG+E") and he indicated that if the Town is considering a Matrix-owned Broadband Network, the state will put the Town's project on pause. This means EOHEC would ask Becket to stop incurring new charges against the grant, pay outstanding invoices with the consent of the EOHEC grant manager and provide an accounting and reconciliation of the grant funds. He further discussed and outlined specifics listed in his handout about the ramifications and what the Town may expect. Becket would need to return to the Massachusetts Broadband Institute to transfer to its flexible grant program. Bill Ennen explained that at the joint discretion of Becket and EOHEC, WG+E may complete Phase 2 and Becket will pay the invoices associated with work done under Phase 2. Bill Ennen hopes the information Becket needs will be obtained through Phase 2. The pause would be necessary to prevent opening up a whole new area of inquiry that spins WG+E Engineers into a new and costly direction.

Chris Lynch asked what if the Town decides not to use WG+E and to use a third party for its project manager. Bill Ennen stated that he would review this on a case by case basis: He would meet with the Town to outline goals, and then his office would evaluate and potentially amend the contract.

Bob Gross indicated that one of the differences between the Town-owned vs Matrix proposal is that the Town-owned make-ready estimates are much higher than Matrix's.

Discussion ensued about the importance of obtaining more realistic estimates in case it becomes necessary to consider scaling back the project, reducing town subsidies, and requesting additional funding at Town Meeting.

Bill Ennen stated that according to Deputy Secretary for Housing and Economic Development Carolyn Kirk, when the state completes the make-ready for all of the towns, any remaining money in that last mile contingency fund might be used for Broadband construction. Bill Ennen cautioned that towns should not count on receiving additional moneys.

3. **Discuss Town Owned Network.**
 - i. **Budget**
 - ii. **Options that require BOS decisions**
4. **Discussion of Matrix Design Group's proposal.**
 - i. **Financial issues**
 - ii. **Options that require BOS decisions**

Agenda items 3 & 4 were discussed together. Bob Gross and the Broadband Ad Hoc Group discussed and fielded questions pertaining to the Broadband Ad Hoc Group's comparison sheet evaluating the trade-offs between a Town-owned vs. a Matrix-owned network.

Discussion included that the BOS will need to determine a policies as to how much debt will fall to the subscribers vs. the Town, and Town subsidies for Broadband operation, and drops.

Michael moved to allow the Broadband Ad Hoc Group to complete Phase 2 of the Broadband Project. Nicole seconded. Bill Elovirta suggested amending the motion to include the stipulation that it stays within the state budget. Michael moved to allow the Broadband Ad Hoc Group to complete Phase 2 of the Broadband High Speed Fiber project with the condition that it stays within the state budget. Nicole seconded. Motion carried unanimously. Michael left the meeting at 3:05 p.m.

Bill Elovirta stated that he would like a more accurate estimate before voting on a decision to select a Town-owned vs. a Matrix-owned network.

Bob Haber (attended the meeting remotely) stated that achieving Broadband is the most important issue in Becket and that it impacts our real estate. He asked the BOS to consider many high risks of building a Town-owned network (Town meeting approval funding is not definite, constructions risks, take rate levels risks, WiredWest potential operational risks due to no relevant experience). He suggested that the Broadband Ad Hoc Group conduct a poll on a heterogeneous group of forty to ascertain a better idea of what the take-rate may be given different parameters. He recommended for the Town to discuss with MBI the potential of obtaining a no cost provider as an alternative. Chris Lynch, Bill Ennen, Jim Drawe and Bob Haber left the meeting at 3:17 p.m.

5. **Executive Session: MGL c. 30A Sec 21 (a) # 3 – To discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining or litigation if an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining or litigating position of the public body and the chair so declares.**

After the recommendation and declaration of the Chairperson, Nicole made a motion for the Board of Selectmen to go into Executive Session under MGL c. 30A Sec 21 (a) # 3 – To discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining or litigation if an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining or litigating position of the public body and the chair so declares. Bill

seconded. Roll Call: Nicole Ledoux – aye; William Elovirta – aye. Bill announced that the BOS would return to regular session after the Executive Session. The BOS went into Executive Session at 3:08 p.m. and returned to the open meeting at 3:19 p.m.

6. **BOS to vote on a revision to the August 15, 2018 meeting minutes**

Nicole moved to strike the below sentence from the Selectmen's 8-15-18 meeting minutes under the agenda item 5 (BOS to consider voting to accept the Town of Becket Community Choice Power Supply Program Aggregation Plan). Bill seconded. Motion carried. Nicole moved to approve the amended minutes of the 8-15-18 meeting. Bill seconded. Motion carried.

Bob indicated that this program promises less
expensive power to the average resident.

7. **Any other business to come before the Board**

In response to David Labreque's concern, the BOS asked Beverly to send an e-mail to the Fire Chief to ask him to arrange to repair broken wires on the communication tower located at the North Becket Fire Station (# 1).

Beverly and Dan advised that Town Administrator Search Committee anticipates submitting finalists to the BOS. They inquired about potential dates for BOS interviews.

8. **BOS to adjourn the meeting**

Nicole moved to adjourn. Bill seconded. Motion carried. At 3:29 p.m. Bill adjourned the meeting.

Respectfully submitted by Beverly Gilbert, *Recording Secretary*

Approved by the Board of Selectmen on 10-16-19 Date

Signed by William H. Elovirta
William H. Elovirta, Board of Selectmen Chairperson

Documents discussed at the Meeting:

- Summary Handout from Bill Ennen
- Broadband Ad Hoc Group
 - 1) Total Cost for Subscribers over 20 year period – Town-owned vs. Matrix Proposal
 - 2) Town-owned v. Matrix comparison