

Minutes
Washington Municipal Light Board
February 15, 2024

- The meeting was called to order at 7:07 PM.
- Attendees: Pauline Combe-Clark, Kent Lew, John McElwain, Richard Spencer
- The minutes of the January 25, 2024 meeting were accepted unanimously. (Motion - Combe-Clark, second - McElwain)
- Next on the agenda was an update on the status of poles that Eversource replaced and sometimes moved in the electric network upgrade work along Route 8. The cost to move Washington's fiber lines has been quoted at \$36,770. The Wired West (WW) cooperative will pay this and then look for reimbursement from Eversource. The agreement with Eversource clearly states that they are responsible. The contractor has started on both Washington's and MBI's (Massachusetts Broadband Institute) lines.

As part of the discussion the MLP manager (K. Lew) gave a detailed description of how shared costs are handled by WW including those that are paid by WW and then debited from the towns' dividends. The latter do not show up directly in the towns' MLP budgets. This may be an issue with the new cooperative agreement.
- Next on the agenda was an update on the status of CAF-2 funds. Now the indication is that those funds may not be available until May. That will impact the town's non-MLP budget and thus the tax rate because this board will not be able to allocate CAF-2 funds to be used for partial payment of the fiber optic system debt service.
- Next on the agenda was an update on the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP), i.e. the \$30 credit to qualifying households that receive service, which will expire in April. There has been no movement by the legislature to fund this

program beyond April. So, the Federal Communications Commission will wind down the program. The board discussed ways to ensure that current participants are aware of the impact well in advance. The decision was to send a letter followed by a telephone call.

- Next on the agenda was an update on the Digital Equity Planning program. The Berkshire Regional Planning Commission (BRPC) is still insisting on a survey. An opinion was expressed that BRPC is “running in circles.” Also, BRPC seems to be abdicating some of the responsibilities that they had been anticipated to take on. The ML manager thinks that MBI is forcing BRPC’s hand. This board needs to decide on a survey/questionnaire that is very specific to Washington. We might want to specifically address the needs of students (primarily access) and the elderly (access, and education/digital literacy). Separately, a program designated as Broadband Equity Access and Deployment (BEAD) is under development by MBI.
- Next on the agenda was an MLP operations report. The manager reported that Washington has two new potential subscribers; but both are underground installations that cross driveways. So, installation will need to wait a bit.
- Follow-ups:
 - The MLP manager and the board chair will coauthor a letter to ACP participants.
 - The MLP manager will send the latest marked-up draft of the WW operating agreement to the board.
- There was no new business.
- The meeting adjourned at 8:39 PM.
- The next meeting will be on March 21, 2024 at 7:00 PM via ZOOM.

Respectfully submitted,

R. Spencer, Clerk