

## WEST WINDSOR SELECTBOARD

Draft Minutes

February 21, 2013

Present: Glenn Seward, Tom Kenyon, Chris Nesbitt, Dave Halpert, Ken Parrot, Cathy Archibald, Martha Harrison

- 1) Call to Order – Selectboard Chair Glenn Seward called the meeting to order at 8:00 AM.
- 2) Public Comment – None
- 3) EC Fiber/Town-wide internet service – Glenn said he and Tom have been hearing that the lack of high-speed internet is affecting property values and the marketability of homes. Ken asked if the comments are coming from a specific geographic location. Glenn said they are coming from the Brownsville-Hartland Road corridor. Dave said he is wondering if current Comcast customers are dissatisfied. Glenn said he has Comcast; the speed is good and the service is excellent. Dave said speed can be tested at [www.speedtest.net](http://www.speedtest.net). Glenn asked who currently has service, what the likelihood of getting service is for those who don't have it, and how the town can speed up the process of getting true high-speed service into the village. Dave described Comcast's territory in the southeast section of town. Dave said Fairpoint's DSL is available to those who are less than 3 miles from the point of presence (POP) in Reading. There was discussion about the different technologies and the likelihood of current Comcast and Fairpoint customers switching to EC Fiber. Tom asked if he could get the equivalent of Dish TV through EC Fiber. Ken said EC Fiber is not currently providing television service, although they are looking at options for doing so. Dave explained that most people can get TV service in other ways and providing TV would be prohibitively expensive for EC Fiber at this time. Glenn asked about Sovernet's plans. Dave said Sovernet's line will only be for education and government entities. Ken added that Sovernet is not allowed to disseminate service to residences. Chris said we need to focus on an umbrella solution for the entire town. Dave said if the main concern is housing values, connecting the library and the town hall is not going to help. There was discussion about stringing fiber from Sovernet's hub, once it is established. Dave said the Sovernet option is more expensive than the Fairpoint option and is also too close to existing Comcast infrastructure. Dave said telecom companies are blocking municipal efforts to provide high-speed internet. Dave said it costs \$25,000 per mile to provide fiber to the home (FTTH) - \$18,000 for the trunk line and \$7,000 to connect subscribers. Dave said the economic model works as long as there are 6 to 10 subscribers per mile. Tom asked about monthly subscriber rates. Ken said, right now, \$94 per month gets phone service and 5 Mbps upload and download speeds for internet. Chris said he thinks the bigger question is how to raise \$250,000 to \$300,000 to do the initial 10 to 12 mile loop. Glenn said he thinks it's highly unlikely that this will get funded. Chris said he, Win Johnson and Ted Siegler think they should look at all the property owners on the proposed route and identify the most likely investors. Chris said if they could get \$125,000 in "earmarks" from "likely investors," they would have a series of neighborhood meetings to see if they can raise the rest. Chris said if enough money is not invested, all the funds go back to the investors. Dave said other EC Fiber towns (Norwich, Pomfret, Barnard, etc.) with similar population densities have exceeded their initial investment goals, the exception being Woodstock which tried to establish a presence in an area that is already served by Comcast. Tom asked why anyone who is not on the route would invest. Dave said most investors in other towns are on or near the route. Dave said there are 144 residences on the proposed initial route and EC Fiber would need 60 to 80 of them to invest and subscribe. Tom asked if the initial loop would serve the resort and the village. Dave said no; that area is already served by Comcast. Dave said the initial loop was chosen because it's close to the POP, it's underserved and it has enough potential subscribers to support operating costs. Dave said local extensions are generally easy to do. Tom asked if there is a plan for routes beyond the initial loop. Dave said not at this time; the engineers would lay out future routes, as financing allows. With the exception of Woodstock, Dave said, all the other towns that have an EC Fiber presence have raised more money than they needed to

meet their initial goal. Dave said it takes about one year after the funds are raised before service is available. Ken said it takes six months just to get pole licenses. Tom asked if there are businesses along the route that would be willing to contribute. Dave said he thinks there are mostly residences on the route. Glenn and Tom expressed an interest in promoting economic development. Chris suggested a meeting, open to everyone in town, with specific invitations for those along the route. Glenn said Seth Warren has told him that one of the first questions that potential home buyers have is about high-speed internet availability. Chris said Seth should be supportive since internet access affects marketability and value, which in turn affect commissions. Chris said it's unfortunate that towns can't invest "idle cash." Dave said towns can't take on debt but he'll check with EC Fiber's legal counsel about using cash reserves. Dave asked Glenn if the town has an amount in mind. Glenn said no; until the effect of the reappraisal on the Grand List is known, the town couldn't make any commitment. Dave suggested using Town Meeting to let people know the date of the EC Fiber meeting. Dave said he will send the Selectboard the proposed route, the FAQs, and the competitive information. Ken noted that fiber is good for 100 years. Chris pointed out that, if EC Fiber is profitable in the future, those profits will come back to the town. Martha asked if the capital markets will ever open up. Chris said he doesn't think so. Tom asked about the Shumlin administration's position. Dave said most of the public funding has been given to Fairpoint and VTel. Those present decided, tentatively, to hold an EC Fiber informational meeting on Thursday, April 11<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 PM.

- 4) Discuss location of Fourth of July sign – Tom said he doesn't see how the sign can be permitted according to state statutes and local zoning regulations. Glenn asked Martha how it would fit with the zoning regulations. Martha said she has not been given any information about size or proposed location. Chris said it is 3' x 6'. Glenn said he doesn't think the state has jurisdiction if the sign is not in the right-of-way. Chris asked for guidance on what the committee can do given that they need to raise funds for the event.
- 5) Sign amended agreement with Aldrich & Elliott – Glenn said the amended agreement is not available. **Glenn moved to table consideration of signing the agreement. Tom seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.**
- 6) Sign Certificate of Compliance re: road and bridge standards – **Glenn moved to sign the Certification of Compliance for town road and bridge standards. Tom seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.**
- 7) Sign Town Clerk's orders – The Selectboard signed the Town Clerk's orders.
- 8) Consider signing letter of support re: HS 122 – Tom expressed concern about supporting a bill that could undergo substantial revision before being adopted. Glenn suggested giving preliminary support for the current draft of the bill. Tom agreed. **Glenn moved to sign the letter of preliminary support, dated February 21, 2013, based on the current draft of H 122, and to keep apprised of revisions as it progresses. Tom seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.**
- 9) Minutes: December 10<sup>th</sup> site visit – Glenn noted that the minutes reflect the site visit to Hannah Road. Tom said we should survey the road in the spring, making sure that Wayne Lemire is present. Martha said there is existing information available about Hannah and Lemire Roads, and related boundary adjustments. Glenn suggested researching the matter. **Glenn moved to approve the minutes of the December 10, 2012 site visit. Tom seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.**
- 10) Adjourn – **Glenn moved to adjourn at 9:25 AM. Tom seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.**

Respectfully submitted,

Martha Harrison