

Town of Warwick
Joint Telephonic Selectboard & Broadband Committee Meeting
March 30, 2020
Draft Minutes

Selectboard Members present: James Erviti, Lawrence Pruyne and Todd Dexter (6:05 PM)

Broadband Members: Tom Wyatt, Brad Compton and Andrea Woods (6:09 PM)

Others present: Town Coordinator David Young

I. Call to Order

Chairman Lawrence Pruyne called to order at 6:00 P.M by remote telephonic & on line video conference.

II. Minutes

Meeting minutes of March 23, 2020 will be taken up at the next posted meeting.

III. Presentations and Discussions

1. Warwick Broadband Service consideration of temporary nonpayment policy change –

The question has come up on how to work with subscribers on nonpayment of services, especially those who have had financial difficulties. Young suggested one way to alleviate overdue accounts could be handled through community service on town owned properties at a preset rate per hour credit to the individuals account. After discussion between the Broadband Committee and Selectboard the idea was taken out of consideration as it would be too hard to track. Young also suggested making an appeal to citizens through donations to assist those in need and cannot make payment. Pruyne thought this could be workable. Broadband Member Dexter said Broadband needs to continue operating as a business. He suggested fees could be waived for the month of April due to the COVID-19 National Emergency. Dexter suggested that the reactivation fee of \$50.00 could be waived for subscribers who pay up their balance during these unprecedented times. Erviti said the best way to handle those situations would be on a case by case basis, also with an agreement in place. He does not want to see this taken advantage of by those who pay on time. Brad Compton said he does not want to see anyone get cut off from service, especially during the current situation.

Wyatt asked how many accounts are currently turned off due to financial difficulties. Erviti said there are five households disconnected because of nonpayment. He said there are some customers on the edge of paying. Young said the system has another price option of \$30.00 per month which is a slower bandwidth. He noted that larger internet companies charge by the bandwidth which will slow the speed of the service. Pruyne suggested that accounts that are paid up to date pay \$20.00 per month during the State of Emergency. No action was taken. Pruyne asked if there was any other discussion and called for a motion.

Erviti MOVED that Broadband will work with individuals who have overdue accounts on a case by case basis and determine a payment plan, with the discretion to waive the \$50.00 reconnection fee. Dexter SECONDED, Motion CARRIED 3-0-0

2. Coronavirus – update, nothing at this time.

3. Warwick Elementary- Pruyne said he has not had any communication with the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education Commissioner Jeffrey Riley since the March 9th meeting. He feels this is a good thing. Pruyne said he and Young are writing letters to Commissioner Riley regarding Susan Hollins will be leaving and a reply to the March 9th meeting. The meeting reply states the town's thanks for the Commissioner hosting the gathering and a recap of the blended learning model which is one of the options Warwick is seeking for WCS. Pruyne noted that the blended learning model is popular right now with all of the school districts trying to figure out how to continue educating during school closures across the state. He also said that there is a growing consensus in town seeking judicial review by town's people if WCS is closed by DESE. Young has asked the board for approval by a vote for the chairmen to sign the letter to DESE Commissioner Riley.

Erviti MOVED to allow Selectboard Chair Lawrence Pruyne to sign the letter to Commissioner Jeffrey C. Riley of the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education regarding the March 9 2020 meeting with Warwick. Dexter SECONDED. Motion CARRIED 3-0-0

4. New and other Business unanticipated at the time of meeting posting-

Town Election – Young said he and Town Clerk Jeannette Fellows have been following recent developments with the State Legislature regarding the possible temporary change of Election laws. The Legislature has been discussing an extension until the end of May to allow towns and cities to cut poles being open a minimum of four hours to help limit exposure to COVID-19. Young also said there is a possibility of drive up voting, he likes the idea of it seeing there are not any contested positions this year. Fellows had mentioned to Young she was aware of a western mass town that held their elections outside. Erviti is not in favor of this due to weather issues. Erviti asked about on line format for the ATM, Young said this would be hard to control

and the site we are using for the Selectboard meetings is not reliable for large groups. Dexter suggested a June ATM date, he said Orange has theirs the first week of June each year. Erviti said most likely COVID-19 will still be with us and it would not make a difference.

5. Citizens comment and suggestions for future agenda items. - None

Adjournment

Erviti MOVED to adjourn at 6:50 PM. Dexter SECONDED. Motion CARRIED 3-0-0.

Documents consulted at this meeting:

*Meeting Agenda dated March 30, 2020

*Copy of Amendment 2 the Last Mile Broadband Grant Agreement between Massachusetts Technology Collaborative and Town of Warwick. RE: 6 month contract extension, signed by Selectboard Chair Lawrence Pruyne.

*Draft copy of a letter to the Commissioner Jeffrey C. Riley of the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. The letter was prepared by David Young and Lawrence Pruyne. RE: March 9th meeting between Warwick and DESE.