

Minutes  
Washington Municipal Light Board  
November 2, 2023

- The meeting was called to order at 7:05 PM.
- Attendees: Kent Lew, John McElwain, Richard Spencer
- The minutes of the September 27 regular meeting and executive session were accepted unanimously with one amendment (regular meeting). (Motion - McElwain, Second – Spencer) Mr. Spencer asked about storage of minutes of executive sessions. The board should establish a file at the town hall and place printed copies of minutes, including executive sessions, in that file. Eventually (e.g. after Wired West (WW) has a signed ISP contract) the board could vote to publicly release those minutes.
- Next on the agenda was an update on the Resiliency, Redundancy, Reliability (R, R, & R) project for the southern tier. The R, R, & R system for the tier is now fully up and running smoothly. Final payments for the project are being processed. The system has been tested; but no live testing has been performed for fear of a possible, but unlikely, interruption of service. Live testing may be possible later.
- Next on the agenda was an update on CAF-2 funding. The funds are still on track for release in the first quarter of 2024. Washington is expected to receive about \$90,000.
- Next on the agenda was a general operations update.
  - Washington currently has 196 subscribers, including one on the Life-Line program (\$9.95 credit for low-income users) and six in the Affordable Connectivity program (\$35 monthly subsidy).
  - There were thirteen trouble calls for September.

- The FCC passed a regulation last year that requires a “Broadband Facts” information label, similar in intent to the nutrition labels that are familiar for food. Information such as upload/download speeds would be included.
- The WW board has decided to allow waiving of all additional fees such as federal and state telephone fees or a static Internet Protocol (IP) address fee. The result will be a reduction in the real estate tax burden, but with a slight reduction in income returned to the MLP. The board advised the MLP manager to accept the proposal.
- WW has proposed to adjust the method for member town sharing of preventive maintenance costs such as tree trimming/removal. Currently those costs are shared equally among the towns regardless of where the maintenance is performed. The proposal would put some of the burden on the specific town involved.
- It was proposed that a cap of \$10,000 of shared cost per town per year be included. That is, any one town’s discretionary preventative maintenance would be covered by the WW cooperative up to \$10,000. Beyond that, expenses would be paid, but the town’s dividend share would be reduced accordingly. WW Board approval would be needed for additional expenses to be treated as shared. Waivers would be allowed with WW Board approval.
- There were two closely related proposals regarding service calls. Whip City Fiber (WCF) wants to bill (\$150) for service calls that cannot be completed because the customer is not at home to allow admittance. The board thought that in those cases the customer, rather than the town MLP should be held responsible. However, waivers should be allowed based on a clearly defined policy.

The second proposal is to charge the customer for repairs made necessary by customer ignorance or negligence, such as neglecting to call Dig Safe. The problem comes in the definition of negligence. The MLP manager is in favor of charging the customer in the most egregious cases, however they may be defined.

- The WFC operations contracts with the WW towns all expire in 2024. At that time changes could be made. The MLP manager will distribute the current contract so that board members may make comments regarding possible changes.

- Next on the agenda was an update on the Digital Equity program. There was nothing to report except that the joint Becket, Otis, Washington, Windsor proposal has not progressed since the last board meeting.
- The board entered executive session to discuss WW strategy relative to ongoing contract negotiations with potential internet service provider/network operator (ISP/NO) contractors at 8:20 PM. The motion to enter executive session (McElwain, second –Spencer) was accepted unanimously on a roll-call vote.
- The regular meeting resumed at 8:32 PM with the only remaining business being the setting of the next meeting date. That will be on November 30 at 7:00 PM, if necessary.
- The meeting adjourned at 8:35 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

R. Spencer, Clerk