



TOWN OF WORTHINGTON

P.O. Box 247 · Worthington, MA 01098 · (413) 238-5577 · FAX (413) 238-5579

SELECTBOARD

April 19, 2016

The Honorable Charlie Baker
Massachusetts State House
Office of the Governor, Room 280
Boston, MA 02133

Dear Governor Baker:

We are writing to ask for your support to ensure that the development of Last Mile Broadband Infrastructure to provide access to high quality, affordable broadband to our town becomes a reality as soon as possible. This is essential to the economic well-being and quality of life in our town.

Our town fully understands the risks of small towns embarking on a project of this scale. That is why we've banded together with other WiredWest towns to reduce the risk for any one town and make the project feasible. Most of the towns in our region cannot individually afford to build a fiber-to-the-home network but collectively we can. As evidenced by your Community Compact initiatives, you understand well the concept of shared services. WiredWest's plan has been exhaustively reviewed by industry consultants, MBI's consultants, MBI staff, friends and foes alike and WiredWest has responded to those criticisms.

In December 2015, MBI communicated to municipal broadband leaders that "MBI will not authorize expenditures of state funds for a project with core elements as proposed in [WiredWest's] draft operating agreement and business plan." Since that time, WiredWest has been listening to MBI's concerns and has taken steps to address them. A Negotiating Team was formed and undertook an in-depth review of WiredWest's entire plan to include governance, finance and technology. Their findings, "Status of the Broadband Project in WiredWest Member Towns as of March 21, 2016", were widely distributed to member towns. WiredWest voted on March, 26, 2016, to support deployment of a regional fiber-optic broadband network by our municipal light plant cooperative, WiredWest, through which its member towns will share ownership of the central network components, and which will serve customers by operating local network infrastructure owned by individual towns.

The Town of Worthington is prepared to vote on the necessary debt authorization for the town's share of the costs of construction and installation of a high-speed broadband and to subsequently vote on debt exclusion to allow the town to raise additional tax revenue to pay debt service on what it borrows. As a result of the indecisiveness on the part of the MBI and more recently your administration's "pause," we have been hesitant to move forward with those votes. Our citizens are impatient with the delay in

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getting started. The lack of progress on this effort is having severe and measurable impacts on our town's economic development. This is illustrated by its impact on real estate values and the ability to sell our homes as evidenced by the Wall Street Journal article of June 30, 2015, titled *How Fast Internet Affects Home Prices* which tells a story specific to Worthington. We also hear the same regularly from Realtors and Home Owners. Businesses cannot grow here and those who choose to work from home and/or telecommute find it difficult to live here and do business, including video producers, environmental engineers, and audiologists, all of whom have spoken out about their difficulty in doing business from their homes in Worthington.

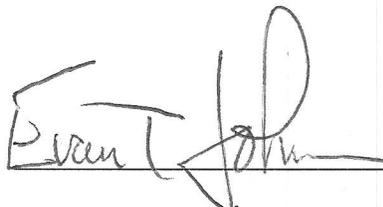
We ask that you take the necessary action to release the state portion of the broadband funding to each town that has passed the necessary bond-authorization and debt-exclusion and provide us a clear path for those actions in Worthington. We ask that you do whatever is necessary to allow MBI to move the project forward. We continue to believe that bringing broadband internet to Worthington is essential for sustaining population growth and increasing economic development opportunities.

Enclosed please find our resolution in support of moving this project along. We thank you for your ongoing support of this crucial infrastructure project. We cannot accomplish it without state funds and so look forward to receiving confirmation of your support and action to be taken.

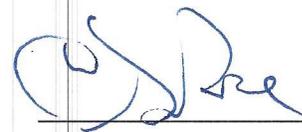
Sincerely,



Richard A. Wagner



Evan T. Johnson



Charley Rose



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SELECTBOARD

Resolution on Last Mile Regional Fiber-to-the-Home Broadband Network

Whereas bringing ubiquitous fiber optic broadband internet service to small towns in western Massachusetts is essential to our economic viability, opportunity, education, health care and quality of life,

Whereas WiredWest is a cooperative of municipal light plants (MLPs) formed by towns unserved by broadband, using state statute, and for the express purpose of delivering a sustainable, affordable, community-controlled and regional fiber optic network to its member towns,

Whereas the Massachusetts legislature passed and the governor signed Bill H4355, an Act financing information technology equipment and related projects, on June 6, 2014, which authorized \$50 million to the Massachusetts Broadband Incentive Fund,

Whereas the Massachusetts Broadband Institute (MBI) in partnership with WiredWest, presented a jointly-developed plan to our town over a year ago for the construction of a regional fiber-to-the-home broadband network,

Whereas the Massachusetts Broadband Institute already promised towns \$18 million for project management, design and engineering, legal and other administrative costs specifically associated with a regional fiber-to-the-home broadband network,

Whereas the Massachusetts Broadband Institute already promised towns \$22 million for the construction of last-mile broadband solutions,

Whereas the Massachusetts Broadband Institute is currently 9 months behind in running this project,

Whereas WiredWest member towns sent resolutions to MBI in December, 2014 confirming their support for WiredWest's initiative to construct and operate a regional "fiber-to-the-home" broadband network with the understanding and expectation that MBI would continue to expend significant resources to further develop design, engineering, construction and financing plans for the WiredWest regional initiative,

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Whereas the Massachusetts Broadband Institute already published proportional allocations of these funds to our town,

Whereas our town understands both the importance and the risks of constructing and operating a broadband network,

Whereas Session Law Acts 2014 Chapter 198, an Act relative to the Massachusetts Broadband Institute, required the convening of a working group of potential grant recipients by October 31, 2014, which has yet to occur,

Whereas Bill H4377, an Act promoting economic growth across the Commonwealth, required a special commission on last mile policy that was to include representatives from western Massachusetts and was to have produced a report by January 15, 2015, which has yet to occur,

Whereas, on July 30th 2015, the Massachusetts Broadband Institute promulgated a last mile policy without input from the towns,

Now Therefore Be It Resolved, We the Board of Selectmen of the Town of Worthington hereby request that the Baker/Polito administration:

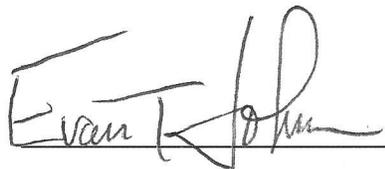
Lift "the pause" for the last mile program, and;

Instruct the Massachusetts Broadband Institute to accept input and policy direction from the towns and to **JOINTLY** produce an actionable plan that is acceptable to our town by June 30th, 2016.

We the Selectboard of the Town of Worthington request a written response from the Baker/Polito administration in advance of our Annual Town Meeting on May 7, 2016.



Richard A. Wagner



Evan T. Johnson



Charley Rose