

Letter: Otis has a partner in Broadband Institute

The Berkshire Eagle

POSTED: 09/13/2015 12:31:16 PM EDT [3 COMMENTS](#) | UPDATED: 3 DAYS AGO

Otis has a partner in Broadband Institute

To the editor:

In regard to the Sept. 9 article stating, "Otis out of broadband co-op, preferring to go it alone," Otis is not "going it alone." Its partner is the Massachusetts Broadband Institute (MBI), the agency managing the regional design and construction of the "Last Mile" broadband project for all communities regardless of participation in WiredWest.

Many area residents, officials and journalists believe that this is WW's project, that WiredWest is designing and building the network, that WW membership is needed to access towns' share of the \$40 million in state funds and that 40 percent of your town's residents must sign up with WW to get the state funds — none of which are true.

Otis' decision to opt out of Wired West was based on due diligence. Before making it, town officials met with MBI, the Leverett Broadband Committee and four vendors, including WiredWest. We reviewed MBI's information and that of several vendors including WW and communicated with officials in other communities. We concluded that WW's aspiration to repay all the towns' debt service was unrealistic, that the disadvantages of transferring control of a \$5.5 million taxpayer funded asset to a start-up out-weighed any advantages, and that regional cost savings at the design and construction phase are inherent in working with MBI.

To better understand the program and their options, town officials, residents and journalists should visit broadband.masstech.org and read the four-page summary of MBI's Last Mile program. Officials should hold a conference call with MBI officials. Towns should not commit to any vendor, including WiredWest, without making sure they understand the program and the choices available to them.

Otis sought a quiet withdrawal from WiredWest but went public after WW responded to Otis' withdrawal with an e-mail to 425 pre-subscribers (still over 200 short of WW's 40 percent requirement). WW urged them to contact the Select Board to protest and not support a broadband bond vote unless pre-subscribers were convinced Otis had the "right solution." We received about 20 e-mails in response, half just asking what Otis was doing if not going for WW.

Otis will be holding a special town meeting in October and a special election in November to authorize borrowing for Otis' broadband network. We look forward to continuing to work with MBI to make broadband a reality in Otis.

Christopher S. Morris Otis The writer is Otis town administrator.