**Westport Finance Committee**

**Meeting Minutes**

**Virtual Meeting-Remote Participation**

**April 12, 2022**

Present: Karen Raus (KAR), Cindy Brown (CB) Charles “Buzzy” Baron (BB), Tracy Priestner (TP), Thomas Schmitt (TS), Hugh Morton (HM) Bob McCarthy (BM), Gary Carreiro (GC), Kevin Rioux (KR)

Also Present: Nicole Pearsall (Town Accountant), Keith Novo(Internet Advisory Committee), Jeff Christensen, Devin Cox(Municipal Light Plant)

KAR opened the meeting at 6:30 p.m.

KAR read the following: Under MGL Chapter 30A, section 20(f) – Meeting being recorded. *Pursuant to Governor Baker’s March 12, 2020, Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G.L. c. 30A, §18, and the Governor’s March 15, 2020, Order imposing strict limitations on the number of people that may gather in one place, this meeting of the Westport Finance Committee is being conducted via remote participation. No in-person attendance of members of the public will be permitted, but every effort will be made to ensure that the public can adequately access the proceedings as provided for in the Order.*

*A reminder that persons who would like to listen to or view this meeting while in progress may do so by following the remote links:* https:// meet. google.comhttps://meet.google.com/jph-idsb-ndc ,dial in this number dial:

**1.Warrant Article Discussion:** (Kar) opened up the meeting with Jeff Christensen from Municipal Light Plant giving a presentation regards to (Warrant Article 20), Jeff Christensen talked about his presentation saying Entry Point Networks and Entry Point is both a consulting firm that's focused on city or municipal networks. We also have technologies, some software for Open Access networks, A municipal light plant is the legal structure in the Commonwealth that allows for a city or a town to own and operate telecommunications infrastructure, basically the statute that addresses this. There are 18 states that do not allow a city or a town to own a fiber optic network if it's going to serve to the home or to the business. And you might ask, well, why not? And then the real answer is be-embus which in your case would be Charter Cable. He continued to say for the municipal light plant you would need a to vote with a 2/3 majority at each of two town meetings, would have to do it twice. And has to be a 2/3 majority both times. The first vote is a procedural vote because you can just shut it down in the second vote. If for whatever reason, the town meeting members wanted to step away from this. Town meetings need to be held at intervals of not less than two months, not more than 13 months apart and also in two separate fiscal years. Fiber optic will replace coax cause has faster speed, much more capacity. what the Internet Advisory Committee is looking at is, is this something that the town wants to own, wouldn't necessarily need to operate it and has enough demand in Westport because of bandwidth needs and other considerations, price is it is a primary one and other cities that have done this have demonstrated that they've been able to do it. 25% reduction in costs.

Keith Novo from (Internet Advisory Committee) mentioned Charter right now runs Co-ax cable throughout the town. The cables are maxed out for their capacity. What they're trying to do for them to provide anymore services they would need to run fiber, that fiber would cost them a lot of money, and they would pass that cost down to you as a business. They would have to recoup that within five to seven years. There would be a very sharp increase in your monthly budget. Being able to create Municipal Light Power that would be able to run that fiber, they will be able to amortize that cost over 25 to 30 years. there's a decreased cost in municipal light and power company. The recipient, the holder, would be repaid by the consumer, the customers get the Internet access Internet at being provided by that Municipal Light Plant there wouldn't be a cost to the town and would be to the customers that are using that fiber.

(GC) mentioned opening up competition like Comcast to help lower cost.

Keith Novo said what we can do is the town takes on the leadership role of running the infrastructure and leaving it open for other vendors to join, including, Charter Spectrum if they so choose could be a provider on it, but this is going to be the intent is for the town to own the infrastructure fiber.

(Kar) mentioned feels as though from a Finance Committee standpoint, we don't have any financial information, so we can't even determine the basis of anything. This report that's going to come out four to six months from now, so we can't make any determination on its financial merits at this point. But it seems to me that this vote does not have any financial implications to this, and to just make no recommendation on this.

**Article 20:** To vote to acquire a municipal light plant and to authorize such plant to construct purchase or lease and maintain such facilities as may be necessary for the distribution of the operation of a telecommunication system for the municipal use or for the use of its customers.

(RM) motioned to make no recommendation (TP) seconded and the roll call vote was unanimous in favor.

(Kar) mentioned for the public there is a financial report, on the town website 24 pages for anybody if they want to understand more about the budget and the current fiscal situation.

**2. Override Discussion: N/A**

**3.Committee Update /Liaison reports**: N/A

**4. Minutes**: The minutes of 1/25/2022 was presented for approval. (BM) motioned and (KR) second to approve. The roll call vote was unanimous in favor.

The minutes of 2/01/2022 was presented for approval (BM) motioned and (GC) second to approve. The roll call vote 8-0 1 abstained.
The minutes 2/8/2022 was presented for approval. (BM) motioned and (HM) second to approve. The roll call vote was unanimous in favor.

**5.Topic for Next Meeting Agenda**: Year-end transfers, Reserve Requests

**6. Meeting Schedule:** April 26 (hold/pending only if needed)
May 3 (6:30pm before ATM in CAF)
June 14

**7. Correspondence:** N/A

**8.Topic not anticipated forty-eight (48) hours in advance of the meeting**: N/A

**Adjourn:** There being no further business to come before this meeting, a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:45pm (TP) motioned and (KR) second and the roll call vote in favor was unanimous.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jessica McKane, Recording Clerk

REFERENCE DOCUMENTS:

0.2 2022 04 12 Agenda INDEXED

Minutes February 1,2022

Minutes February 8, 2022

Minutes January 25,2022