



TOWN WHERE A U.S. FLAG WAS FIRST
RAISED OVER A PUBLIC SCHOOL. MAY, 1812

TOWN OF COLRAIN

BOARD OF SELECTMEN

55 MAIN ROAD,

COLRAIN, MASSACHUSETTS 01340-

TELEPHONE (413) 624-6306

FAX (413) 624-8852

E-MAIL colrain@mtdata.com

December 22, 2014

Dear Senator Rosenberg:

We are writing to express our concerns with the recent proposal by the Massachusetts Broadband Institute and Wired West to install the "Last Mile" fiber network in unserved communities in western and central Massachusetts including the town of Colrain. Based on the information presented at a recent forum held on December 11, 2014 at the Franklin Regional Council of Governments in Greenfield, MA it appears there remain more questions than answers.

The Town of Colrain is being requested to put before its voters this spring a proposal to borrow up to \$4.5 million. If approved this would result in an increase of approximately \$417 per year for a homeowner whose property is valued at \$200,000 (based on preliminary data presented at the above mentioned forum). In addition to this increase, based entirely on predicted debt service costs, the Town would be required to contract with Bond Counsel and a Financial Advisor, the costs of these being unknown at this time. These costs would also be incurred by every other town seeking to borrow for this purpose.

Potential offsets to Town obligations were presented to at the forum in two forms, neither of which inspires great confidence:

1. State Grant Funds expected in three rounds, subject to continued Commonwealth bond funding.
2. If Wired West succeeds, when the towns set their tax levies and budgets in future years, towns may be able to rely on distributions from Wired West to offset G.O (general obligation) bond debt service in whole or in significant part.

Is continued Commonwealth bond funding expected and assured?

Since Wired West is currently only a volunteer group with no paid staff or organizational structure what assurance does the town have as to its future structure and associated operating expenses? Also, since

Wired West is not contractually bound to share any revenue what assurance does the town have that this will ever occur and, if it does, in what manner will the sharing be done?

Based on our analysis of the limited information presented us at this time it appears that the best hope for the "Last Mile" to be achieved in an efficient, equitable and affordable manner would be for the Commonwealth to fund the entire project. This would require a commitment of an additional \$60-79 million dollars. The Town of Colrain views the "Last Mile" as a vital economic development project for the 44 communities comprising Wired West, one that certainly warrants additional investment by the Commonwealth. The residents of these 44 communities have supported expensive and extensive projects in other parts of the state, through their tax payments, in the spirit of economic development even though they have provided little or no benefit to these towns. Continuing in this sprit we respectfully request the Commonwealth assist us in this endeavor.

Sincerely,

Colrain Board of Selectmen



Eileen Sauvageau, Chai



Mark Thibodeau



Jack Cavolick

CC: Member Towns of Wired West