

Otis has a partner in Broadband Institute

The Berkshire Eagle

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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.

Comments:

Richard from Amherst

The thing that people should look at is the lack of fiscal viability and the level of risk to towns with the Wired West model. ww wants the towns to bond for the network and sign ownership over to Wired West. That is fiscally irresponsible and no select board or fin-com should sign such a deal.

Wired West started before Leverett started its network project.

Leverett has finished building its working network and is serving gigabit speed synchronous, active Ethernet (not gpon) internet service and telephone-network over fiber optic cables connected to 800+ homes and businesses.

What has Wired West actually built in all this time? The answer is nothing but a pile of bills for high priced consultants and a bigger pile of unfulfilled promises.

Otis gets it and has acted to follow leverett's lead. Other towns are quietly following the same course. Each town will have to build and own their own network. Leverett has shown how it can be successfully done.

MBI is a reliable state agency partner in this effort. People have to realize that all Wired West has to offer is pie in the sky by and by.

[Annamariesun7](#)

Hello Hinsdale people! Pay attention to this letter! I hope someone has put the link up in the Hinsdale site since certain people are trying to convince the residence that if they do not sign up with Wired West they will pretty soon have no internet at all because Verizon won't be offering what some of us have now. SOME of us knew better than to just go along blindly following what these people said and refused to be bullied into handing over hard earned money for something that may or may not happen refundable or not. A lot of us wonder WHY these certain people are pushing so hard for Wired West now especially since we know there IS an alternative out there that Hinsdale pushers never mentioned. Would love to know more and I will read and learn. Thank you for this eye opening letter.

[Guest Gertrude Annamariesun7](#)

maybe this is why

WiredWest will hire an experienced staff to fulfill operational, financial, marketing, customer service and network maintenance roles. Some of these functions may be provided by third party contractors. WiredWest's key personnel will include an Executive Director, a Finance Director, a Technical Director and a Marketing and Sales Director in addition to office, maintenance, technical, customer service and sales staff. The number of office, maintenance, technical and customer service staff will increase as the network grows. A list of the initial staff, with salaries, appears below. 1.5 million a year payroll

Executive Director \$ 150,000

Finance Director \$ 125,000

Technical Director \$ 125,000

Marketing and Sales Director \$ 125,000

Office Staff \$ 50,000

27 Administrative Assistant \$ 50,000

Maintenance Staff \$ 52,000

27 Technical Staff \$ 75,000

Sales Staff \$ 45,000

27 Customer Service Staff \$ 30,000