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January 9, 2017

Office of the Select Board
PO Box 677
Charlemont, MA 01339

Mr. Peter Larkin
Special Advisor to the Secretary of Housing and Economic Development
Chairman of the Board, Massachusetts Broadband Institute

Dear Mr. Larkin,

The Town of Charlemont would like to express our support for the response of Whip City Fiber (WCF), a division of Westfield Gas and Electric (WG+E), to the MBI Private Provider RFP. While we understand that the response submitted by WCF may not meet all of the presumptive requirements outlined in the RFP, we strongly encourage you to make a full evaluation of this proposal, in consultation with interested unserved towns, and allow this proposal to move forward under the Private Provider RFP.

As you know, the Town of Charlemont has struggled to identify a financially feasible and sustainable model for broadband deployment. The proposal from Whip City Fiber to provide turnkey operation of municipally-owned networks offers a number of compelling advantages that are extremely attractive to our town:

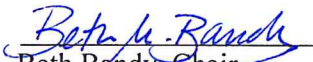
1. WCF has demonstrated a successful operating history serving broadband subscribers in Westfield. The success of their initial pilot projects is enabling them to expand service to additional parts of Westfield and to contemplate serving customers outside of Westfield as an extension of their current service offerings.
2. The WCF proposal has the potential to become an efficient regional operational structure for a multi-town network. Financial projections suggest they could serve customers in additional towns at a price point similar to what Westfield residents pay, which is very competitive compared to other broadband options in Charlemont. The increase in scale is also likely to benefit current ratepayers in Westfield, a win-win for all involved.
3. As a municipal entity (MLP), the interests of WCF are closely aligned with the interests of Charlemont. The mission and mandate of WCF is to provide excellent broadband service *at cost* to its ratepayers. This in contrast to other private provider solutions which may involve ceding a monopoly position to a for-profit entity that has a fiduciary requirement to maximize shareholder value. At the same time, Charlemont would retain local control over its network.
4. Being part of an electric utility confers additional advantages. WCF already has infrastructure for maintaining electric and fiber lines, including maintenance personnel and co-operative agreements to borrow trucks and personnel in the event of storms or other emergencies.
5. Last but not least, they are a *local* solution, providing jobs and economic growth in Western Massachusetts.

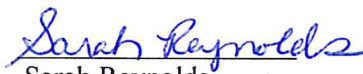
While there are details to be worked out, we believe a partnership between Westfield Gas and Electric and a subset of the unserved towns could be an extremely attractive broadband solution for Charlemont. A scalable

operational plan with a trusted partner is a critical consideration for our citizens to invest the necessary capital for constructing a municipally-owned fiber network. We are very interested in pursuing this opportunity to join with WG+E and a group of other unserved towns to establish such an operational framework. We urge you to support this type of solution as an option for our town under the umbrella of the Private Provider RFP.

Sincerely,

Town of Charlemont Select Board


Beth Bandy, Chair
Select Board


Sarah Reynolds
Select Board


Toby Gould
Select Board