

APPROVED MINUTES

SEVENTY FOURTH MEETING

of the

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

of the

MASSACHUSETTS BROADBAND INSTITUTE

June 18, 2024

Zoom Videoconference

The Seventy Fourth Meeting of the Board of Directors of the Massachusetts Broadband Institute (“MBI”) was held on June 18, 2024, via Zoom videoconference, pursuant to notice duly given to the Directors and publicly posted on the MBI website with corresponding notice provided to the Office of the Secretary of State and the Executive Office for Administration and Finance.

The following members of the MBI Board of Directors attended the meeting: Secretary of Economic Development Yvonne Hao (represented by Peter Larkin of the Executive Office of Economic Development), Fred Keator, Sean Cronin, Don Dubendorf, Linda Dunlavy, Paul Nicolai, Karen Charles, David Clark, and Carolyn Kirk.

The following Mass Tech Collaborative staff were present: Michael Baldino, Marc Leonetti, Brianna Wehrs, Rachel Stachowiak, Staisha Chavis, Jennifer Saubermann, and Paula Foley.

Also present were Steve Baker, Director of Broadband and Digital Equity, Executive Office of Economic Development, and Niall Quinlan, Special Projects Coordinator, Department of Telecommunications and Cable.

Mr. Larkin observed the presence of a quorum of the MBI Board of Directors and called the meeting to order at 12:01 p.m.

Agenda Item I Approval of Minutes

Following a period of brief discussion and upon a motion duly made and seconded, it was VOTED by a roll call vote, with Mr. Clark abstaining:

The Board of Directors of the Massachusetts Broadband Institute hereby adopts the Draft Minutes of the Seventy Third Meeting of the MBI Board of Directors held on June 22, 2023, by Zoom video conference as a joint meeting

with the Board of Directors of the Massachusetts Technology Park Corporation, as the formal Minutes thereof as to the sections of said Minutes that relate to matters within the purview of the MBI Board of Directors.

Mr. Cronin joined the meeting after the vote.

Agenda Item II Report of the MBI Board of Directors Chairperson

Mr. Larkin began his report by noting that both MBI's Last Mile program and Middle Mile program have been progressing with 48 of the 53 Last Mile towns now having completed broadband networks. Mr. Larkin then welcomed and introduced Steve Baker, the Director of Broadband and Digital Equity for the Executive Office of Economic Development. Mr. Baker then provided an overview of his background and experience in wireless telecom infrastructure and explained his new lead role in developing broadband policy for the Commonwealth. Before turning the discussion over to Mr. Baldino, Ms. Kirk introduced Mass Tech's new Chief Financial Officer, Mr. Leonetti, to the Board.

Agenda Item III Massachusetts Broadband Institute Fiscal Year 2025 Operating Plan and Budget (motion item)

Mr. Baldino began a discussion of MBI's operating plan and budget for expenditures to support MBI programs, initiatives and activities funded from the Broadband Innovation Fund in fiscal year 2025 ("FY25"). Mr. Baldino first provided an overview of the Middle Mile program, stating that the top priorities for FY25 for Middle Mile activities are to execute a new network operator agreement and to implement a significant refresh of network equipment. Mr. Baldino noted that the existing network operator agreement has been extended through calendar year 2024 and that new network equipment, including replacing outdated Juniper switches, will result in a more efficient and scalable network, with lower costs down the road. Turning to Last Mile activities, Mr. Baldino explained that there are two (2) Last Mile projects remaining: 1) the Charter project in Royalston; and 2) the Wi-Valley project in the Towns of Florida, Hawley, Monroe, and Savoy. Mr. Baldino noted that although construction on the Wi-Valley project is complete, Wi-Valley itself is experiencing financial difficulties which will require a different long-term solution for the Towns. This solution, explained Mr. Baldino, could include further build-out by Charter with the assistance of federal grants. With regard to Royalston, Mr. Baldino explained that the remaining premises not covered by Charter's Rural Digital Opportunity Fund ("RDOF") grant, will be served through a financial assistance grant provided by Mass Tech.

Turning to a discussion on budget and staffing levels, Mr. Baldino asked Mr. Leonetti to discuss the bond-funded FTEs and costs. Mr. Leonetti provided a comparison of FY24 and FY25 budgets, and noted an overall reduction in the amount of total division expenses and FTEs funded by bond funds in FY25 (from \$2 million in FY24 to \$1.6 million in FY25). This is due in part, explained Mr. Leonetti, to the fact that a significant portion of MBI staffing is being allocated to and will be funded by federal funds which results in the reduction in personnel expenses covered by bond funds. Mr. Leonetti also noted that the following capital revenue amounts are included in the FY25 budget: 1) \$820,000 for Last Mile grants; and 2) \$5.25 million for Middle Mile network infrastructure costs, capital upgrades, and operating costs.

Following a period of discussion, and upon a motion duly made and seconded, it was unanimously VOTED by a roll call vote:

The Board of Directors of the Massachusetts Broadband Institute (the “Institute”) does hereby approve the Fiscal Year 2025 Budget and Operating Plan for the Institute (the “Plan”), as presented, and does hereby recommend that the Executive Committee of the Board of Directors of the Massachusetts Technology Park Corporation (“MassTech”) take final action to approve the Plan as part of MassTech’s Fiscal Year 2025 consolidated budget. The Plan is approved in full satisfaction of the requirements of subsection (g) of section 6B of Chapter 40J of the Massachusetts General Laws. The Board of the Institute, subject to final review and approval of the Plan by the Executive Committee of the MassTech Board of Directors, hereby authorizes the Chair to submit the Plan for final approval to the Secretary of Economic Development and the Secretary of Administration and Finance as required by said subsection (g).

Agenda Item IV Digital Equity and Broadband Federal Funding Update

Following the vote on the budget, Mr. Baldino turned to a presentation on MBI’s numerous and varied federally funded programs. Mr. Baldino noted that MBI’s overall strategy is to focus on the three (3) broadband “pillars” of Availability, Adoption, and Quality of Service. Each MBI program, explained Mr. Baldino, supports one or more of the pillars. For example, Mr. Baldino noted that MBI has six (6) separate digital equity initiatives, such as municipal digital equity planning and digital equity implementation programs funded by ARPA, in which 106 towns and cities have enrolled. Mr. Baldino then turned to a discussion of MBI’s broadband infrastructure initiatives, including the Gap Networks Program and BEAD, which will provide funding to reach the approximately 14,000 remaining unserved or underserved broadband serviceable locations (“BSLs”) in the state. Mr. Baldino then provided an overview of the ongoing BEAD Challenge Process which provides MBI with an opportunity to address broadband quality of service issues. Mr. Baldino noted that the BEAD Challenge Process will identify additional unserved and underserved BSLs that will become eligible for BEAD funding. In closing, Mr. Baldino discussed MBI’s Residential Retrofit Program and the Apartment Wi-Fi Program, two (2) initiatives that address broadband needs in public and affordable housing.

Mr. Baldino concluded his overview by indicating he would circulate his slide presentation to the Board for their review.

There being no other business to discuss, Mr. Larkin adjourned the meeting at 1:11 p.m.

A TRUE COPY
ATTEST: (Secretary)

DATE:

Materials and Exhibits Used at this Meeting:

1. Draft Minutes – June 22, 2023, MBI Board of Directors Meeting

2. Massachusetts Broadband Institute Fiscal Year 2025 Operating Plan and Budget (motion item)
3. Digital Equity and Broadband Federal Funding Update (presentation)