

Ms Sara J. Clark and Commissioner Charles Peterson,

I was fortunate enough to have attended the meeting at UMASS last evening where comments were made by representatives from Hardwick, Montague, MBI, Tilson etc. Thank you for calling and hosting this meeting. It is important to me as a resident of Hardwick.

Six plus years ago (2010) I helped negotiate the television franchise agreement with Comcast for the town of Hardwick. For three year our committee learned about what parts of town were then not served pole by pole, about franchise contracts, agreements other towns like ours had negotiated and met numerous times with Comcast representatives (primarily Steven Fitzgibbons) from their Springfield office. Despite all our efforts Comcast never moved from their initial position. We met with our Town attorneys , surveyed the citizens of Hardwick and tried to negotiate a better and broader deal but failed. This process took 3 years of volunteer work. A 10 year contract was signed and not completed on time in the western part of Hardwick which was easily lit up by Comcast through their Ware Massachusetts existing network.

Although our committee tried desperately to push for additional services, we were completely stonewalled by Comcast whose favorite word was " No". They constantly reminded us that the deal was all we would get and that they were a "television company not a broadband company" even though our community really wanted broadband. Needless to say my residence was not included in the contract. An MBI representative attended one of our last meetings and promised a wireless, or cable solution because of their middle mile and last mile initiatives . That never happened!! Not even close.

Fast forward to 2016...where our current Broadband Committee headed by our Bob Martin (who spoke last evening) held a meeting outlining their work with MBI and Matrix the vendor they clearly chose to move forward the broadband project in Hardwick. The committee outlined the obvious advantages of a fiber optics solution and hinted that it seemed that there was a fix between MBI and Comcast. And finally that Comcast had old cable hardware that did not actually meet the MBI metrics.

I left the meeting and wrote to my elected legislators, Anne Gobi, Rep Kulick, Rep Berthiume and to interim MBI director Elizabeth Copeland urging them to co fund the Hardwick/ Matrix proposal as soon as possible because of its depth, internet capacity and future thinking process. Senator Gobi and Rep Kuclick had been involved and continued to be involved in discussions with the Karen Polito and Gov. Bakers offices to look more closely at the process MBI was pursuing and it seemed that our elected officials were advocating for Hardwick. More recently they have backed away from advocating and seem prepared to swallow the Comcast recommendation of MBI despite our pleas from Hardwick citizens. I received a telephone call from Ms Copeland shortly after my note to her desk where she insisted that my residence would be covered by the Comcast proposal on her desk and that Matrix was an inferior organization that MBI would no longer consider. I suppose I was to shut up and thank her but I did not. I reminded her of the hard volunteer work of my neighbors and the compelling proposal Matrix made at the meeting I attended (as well as last evening) and that my understanding was that Comcast was a cable television provider and had no obligation to Hardwick for another 7 years. Ms Copeland reminded me that prudent spending of taxpayers

money was her concern and that Comcast was MBI's choice and that I should be grateful. When I asked why MBI had not already completed the statewide connections mandated she merely said "we are working on it" This response seemed insufficient in that MBI has been in business for 6+ years and we in Hardwick are still without.

Regardless of what next steps you take we unconnected residents of Hardwick will have to wait years if we ever get broadband because of MBI's uncaring and stacked process.

I urge you to allow MBI funds to support Hardwick's proposal with Matrix and allow us to have a 21st century broadband solution.

Cordially,

Robert Page

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