

**TOWN OF HAWLEY
MASSACHUSETTS 01339**

TOWN OFFICE:
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**POSITION OF THE HAWLEY BOARD OF SELECTMEN
REGARDING HIGH SPEED INTERNET VENDORS
AND STATE FUNDING ALLOCATIONS
June 12, 2018**

WHEREAS:

1. For the past several years, the Town of Hawley, Massachusetts, through its Communications Committee and Select Board, have reviewed a number of options for bringing affordable high speed Internet service to our residents.
2. In February of this year, the Hawley Communications Committee and Select Board determined that the best option to meet our goals—including cost effectiveness in construction, speed, reliability, coverage to the maximum number of residents, and affordability for subscribers—would be a regional wireless network, as proposed by the vendor Wi Valley, of Keene, New Hampshire, to cover Hawley, Savoy, Florida, and Monroe.
3. Recently, several developments have occurred. These include the emergence of another vendor, RedZone, of Portland, Maine, which also proposes a wireless network for the same four Towns. Additionally, Wi Valley, has modified its original proposal, notably by now partnering with OTELCO—an established national telecommunications company—which they propose will serve as the Internet Service Provider, while Wi Valley handles construction and the physical upkeep of hardware. This collaboration ensures greater financial security for the Wi Valley proposal and also will allow for lower subscriber rates.
4. All of the involved Towns—and both vendors—have taken the position that whatever project goes forward needs to be regional in nature. It will not be cost effective, for a Town or the vendor, for a single community to proceed on its own.
5. On the evening of Thursday, June 7, 2018, representatives from Hawley, Savoy, Florida, and Monroe, met at the Florida Town Hall to discuss the changes to the Wi Valley proposal, the emergence of RedZone, and the best course going forward. **The general consensus was the Towns are comfortable with the latest Wi Valley-OTELCO proposal as it stands and that we would prefer to go forward with it as soon as possible.** There was further consensus that the Massachusetts Broadband Institute and the Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development should make the funding allocations reserved for the Towns available to the vendor either immediately, or in phases, upon successful completion of each phase. In no event should the Towns to be financially liable for fronting build costs to the vendor and only be eligible for reimbursement once the project is finished.

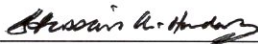
NOW THEREFORE:

1. **After reviewing the relevant information and consulting with our Communications Committee and our neighboring communities, the Hawley Board of Selectmen has determined that our preferred option for a high speed Internet solution continues to be the wireless regional network proposed by Wi Valley, now in partnership with OTELCO, anticipated to cover Hawley, Savoy, Florida, and Monroe.**

In addition to the forgoing and the reasons that informed our initial decision in February, we would like to call attention to the following additional points in favor of the Wi Valley plan. First, Wi Valley's proposal—which Hawley has vetted extensively—and the technology they plan on using, are very well tailored and engineered for our uniquely difficult topography and foliage. We believe the Wi Valley plan can produce the best results with the least disruption to the landscape (large towers, as proposed by alternate vendors). Second, we have been having conversations with Wi Valley for more than two years now: a great deal of engineering has been done; many points of ownership, accountability, and governance have informally been hammered out; and planning has reached an advanced stage. Part of this process involved both Hawley and Savoy expending MBI planning grant allocations to conduct feasibility studies. All of this happened before RedZone came into the picture, admittedly very late in the game. At this point, we are very comfortable with Wi Valley and what they can deliver, ready to go forward, and reluctant to take what would necessarily be a great deal of additional time reinventing the wheel and evaluating another option that, at best, would be of similar performance. Finally, we must again call attention to the fact that the success of this project depends upon it being a regional effort. That said, our partner Towns all appear comfortable with Wi Valley-OTELCO and are all ready to move forward. To date, that is the only proposal which has such consensus.

2. The Board strongly urges the Massachusetts Broadband Institute and the Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development to make the funding allocations reserved for the Towns available to the vendor either immediately, or in phases, upon successful completion of each phase and to refrain from the untenable policy of having the Towns front build costs and be reimbursed at the conclusion of the project.

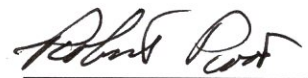
Signed by the Hawley Board of Selectmen,



Hussain A. Hamdan
Chairman



Sarah Rich



Robert Root