

APPROVED MINUTES

SEVENTY FIFTH MEETING

of the

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

of the

MASSACHUSETTS BROADBAND INSTITUTE

June 3, 2025

Videoconference

The Seventy Fifth Meeting of the Board of Directors of the Massachusetts Broadband Institute (“MBI”) was held on June 3, 2025, via 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 remotely: Interim Secretary of Economic Development Ashley Stolba (represented by Steve Baker of the Executive Office of Economic Development), Karen Charles, David Clark, Sean Cronin, Don Dubendorf, Linda Dunlavy, Fred Keator, Peter Nicolai, and Carolyn Kirk.

The following Mass Tech Collaborative staff were present: Jennifer Saubermann, Brianna Wehrs, Michael Baldino, Marc Leonetti, Jody Jones, Kevin O’Brien, Rachael Stachowiak, and Paula Foley.

Mr. Baker observed the presence of a quorum of the MBI Board of Directors and called the meeting to order at 2:01 p.m.

Agenda Item I Report of the MBI Board of Directors Chairperson

As this was Mr. Baker’s first MBI Board Meeting as Board Chair, Mr. Baker began the meeting by providing the MBI Board with a brief overview of his background and experience. Mr. Baker indicated that joined the Executive Office of Economic Development (“EOED”) as Director of Broadband and Digital Equity in February 2024. Before that, Mr. Baker explained, he was employed by American Tower Corporation for twenty-three (23) years, working on wireless tower infrastructure, zoning, and permitting issues for towers and small cell antennas. Mr. Baker then noted that Ms. Jody Jones was promoted to the position of MBI Program Executive approximately six (6) months ago and asked her to introduce herself to the MBI Board.

Ms. Jones stated that she joined MBI three (3) years ago and has a background in health care and business development. Ms. Jones indicated that she has enjoyed her time to date serving as MBI Program Executive, working closely with Mr. Baker and others at EOED. Mr. Baker then turned to approval of the prior MBI Board Meeting minutes.

Agenda Item II Approval of Minutes

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 hereby adopts the Draft Minutes of the Seventy Fourth Meeting of the MBI Board of Directors held on June 18, 2024, by Zoom video conference, as the formal Minutes thereof.

Agenda Item III Massachusetts Broadband Institute Fiscal Year 2026 Operating Plan and Budget (motion item)

Mr. Baker began the discussion of MBI’s fiscal year 2026 (“FY26”) Operating Plan and Budget with an overview of several important issues. First, Mr. Baker indicated that, while MBI and other state broadband offices are navigating choppy waters with regard to the continued availability of federal funding for broadband initiatives, he believes that Massachusetts is in an enviable position compared with other states in that there are only a small number of remaining unserved and underserved locations in the state. Second, Mr. Baker indicated that there are five (5) Last Mile towns where the broadband projects are not fully complete, but that MBI has a plan to resolve this. Further, Mr. Baker explained that the Make-Ready Working Group, which was originally formed as part of MBI’s Middle Mile project, is being reconvened to accelerate the deployment of service to the remaining unserved and underserved locations, described by Mr. Baker as a “race to zero.” In addition, Mr. Baker noted that several recent acquisitions have occurred in the telecom industry, such as Charter’s acquisition of Cox Communications, but that he expected these to have little effect on broadband in Massachusetts. In closing, Mr. Baker pointed out that the Massachusetts Department of Public Utilities (“DPU”) and the Massachusetts Department of Telecommunications and Cable (“DTC”) were looking into modernizing their jointly-administered pole attachment regulations, and that MassTech recently signed a new Network Operator Agreement (“NOA”) with Local Linx to operate the Middle Mile Network. Mr. Baker then turned the presentation over to Mr. Michael Baldino, MBI Director and General Counsel.

Mr. Baldino thanked Mr. Baker and EOED for their partnership on Last Mile and Middle Mile issues, as well as the ongoing MBI initiatives funded by federal funds, and also thanked Ms. Karen Charles, DTC Commissioner, and the DTC staff for their assistance and involvement in these issues. Mr. Baldino explained that the MBI budget, as approved today, would go into the consolidated MassTech budget, which is slated for review by the MassTech Executive Committee later this month. Mr. Baldino then turned to a detailed explanation on the status of Last Mile activities in Massachusetts. Mr. Baldino explained that the five (5) remaining Last Mile towns are partially served, but the networks remain incomplete. For the Town of Royalston, Mr. Baldino explained, Charter will provide a solution funded by the Rural Digital

Opportunity Fund (“RDOF”) and state bond funds before the end of 2025. The other four (4) Last Mile towns (known as the Wi-Valley Towns) will also be addressed by Charter, which has received funding for these towns from MBI’s Gap Network Program, as well as RDOF funding in certain areas. In the interim, GoNetSpeed has taken control of the assets of the now insolvent Wi-Valley MA, Inc. and will continue to provide service until Charter takes over. Mr. Baldino indicated that MBI will re-direct the unexpended MBI funds designated for Wi-Valley (approximately \$976,000) to complimentary investments.

Turning to Middle Mile issues, Mr. Baldino explained that, in addition to the new NOA, MBI has recently conducted a full pricing and service offering refresh with Local Linx. Mr. Baldino stated that the network equipment refresh approved in FY25 is continuing and will result in additional network capacity and bandwidth by the end of 2025. In addition, explained Mr. Baldino, MBI will continue to make strategic capital investments in the Middle Mile network including relocation of certain Points of Interconnection (“POIs”) and additional network extensions. Lastly, Mr. Baldino explained that Local Linx is required to submit an Annual Plan this Fall which will contain a three (3) year look ahead to identify and prioritize high value market segments that will increase network utilization. Mr. Baldino then turned to Chief Financial Officer Mr. Marc Leonetti to present the Fiscal Year 2026 Budget and Staffing plans.

Mr. Leonetti explained that the FY26 Plan and Budget only covers state bond-funded FTEs (full-time equivalents) and costs, while other MBI FTEs and costs are tied to federal funding. Mr. Leonetti noted that Professional Fees (i.e., legal) are expected to decrease from the prior year and the Total Division Expenses and FTEs (Personnel and Other) will be \$1.82 million for FY26.

Ms. Linda Dunlavy joined the meeting at 2:34 p.m.

Mr. Baldino then summarized MBI’s Operating Plan priorities for the upcoming year, focusing on the numerous federally funded initiatives currently underway, including MBI’s Gap Networks Program, BEAD Program, and Residential Retrofit Program. Successful and continued execution of these programs, explained Mr. Baldino, will result in MBI achieving the “zero” in Mr. Baker’s “race to zero” (i.e., universal broadband coverage for all residents in the Commonwealth). Mr. Baldino then addressed the withdrawal by the Trump administration of MBI’s Digital Equity Capacity Grant funding which necessitated the suspension of three (3) planned MBI programs which relied on that funding. Fortunately, explained Mr. Baldino, MBI did not need to lay off staff members as a result of the funding withdrawal and was able to shift staff to other programs. Mr. Baldino then turned to the MBI organizational chart and explained that 13.6 of the 15 MBI FTEs are funded through federal funds.

Mr. Leonetti then concluded the presentation by explaining that Last Mile Financial Assistance Expenditures in FY26 are expected to be \$1.09 million (including a \$121,000 grant to Charter for Royalston, and the remaining, unexpended Wi-Valley funds of \$976,000). The expected Middle Mile Capital Expenditures, explained Mr. Leonetti, are \$1,000,000 for investment in network assets. The FY26 funding sources, explained Mr. Leonetti, are (1) bond funds of \$838,000 for Last Mile activities, and \$2.1 million for Middle Mile activities; and (2) network revenue of \$450,000 from Local Linx consistent with the terms of the new NOA.

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 2026 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 2026 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).

Following the vote, discussion continued on the terms of the recently-signed NOA and anticipated growth in customers and use of the Middle Mile Network. The meeting wrapped up with a continuing discussion on the ongoing pole attachment reform efforts underway at the DPU and DTC.

There being no other business to discuss, Mr. Baker adjourned the meeting at 3:02 p.m.

A TRUE COPY
ATTEST: (Secretary)

DATE:

Materials and Exhibits Used at this Meeting:

1. Draft Minutes – June 18, 2024, MBI Board of Directors Meeting (motion item)
2. Massachusetts Broadband Institute Fiscal Year 2026 Operating Plan and Budget (motion item)