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Contacts: Peter d'Errico, 413-548-9284;  
Margie McGinnis, 413-548-9699

PRESS RELEASE

Leverett 'Last Mile' Network Begins To Go Live

House connections are now being made daily to LeverettNet, the fiber-optic high-speed broadband network being built by the Town of Leverett. The network, in its final construction phase by Millennium Communications Group, will be substantially complete by June 30, 2015. Several dozen locations in the northern part of town have already been turned over to the network Internet Services Provider (ISP), Crocker Communications, for provisioning of subscribers' Internet service. Network Operation services are provided by HG&E Telecom.

The lighting of LeverettNet marks the first 'last mile' network to connect to the Massachusetts Broadband Institute 'middle mile.' The Active Ethernet fiber-optic network design provides symmetrical (equal upload and download speeds) 1-gigabit-per-second Internet access throughout town.

The Town's initial plan was to turn on all subscriber locations at the same time; but interest from pre-subscribers was so strong that the Town's Broadband Committee arranged to offer sequential connections as individual homes are spliced into the network distribution cable. Until the network is fully built, all Internet connections are considered 'beta' sites, subject to possible momentary service interruptions while testing proceeds. When the network is fully tested and provisioned for Internet service, full-featured telephone service will be brought online and subscribers who have contracted for telephone service will have their existing phone numbers transferred to the fiber-optic system.

Leverett's fiber optic network was featured in the special White House report issued in January, 2015: "Community-Based Broadband Solutions: The Benefits of Competition and Choice for Community Development and Highspeed Internet Access." The report cited Leverett as an example of municipal innovation to meet 21<sup>st</sup> century communications needs.

LeverettNet is owned by the Town of Leverett, under the custody of the Leverett Municipal Light Plant (MLP), a governmental entity empowered by Massachusetts law to build and operate a telecommunications system. Funding for the network build was provided by a Town Meeting vote and debt-exclusion referendum in 2012 authorizing a municipal tax bond to provide a fiber-optic connection to every residence in town. Maintenance and operations costs of the network are fully funded by subscribers, at no cost to taxpayers.

Subscribers are billed monthly for ISP Internet and telephone services, plus a charge by the Leverett MLP for network operations and maintenance. Stand-alone Internet service costs \$24.95/month, stand-alone telephone \$29.95/month, and a bundled price for both services of \$44.95/month. The total monthly cost for a subscriber with both Internet and telephone is \$94.90, including the MLP cost.

The monthly MLP cost of \$49.95/month represents the annual cost of operations and maintenance divided by the number of subscribers. The monthly MLP cost will decrease as more subscribers are added. ISP costs are guaranteed to remain the same for at least the next three years, under a contract between the ISP and the MLP.

There are currently more than 600 subscribers to LeverettNet. This amounts to 70% of all potential subscribers. Pre-subscription experience for other networks in the U.S. rarely reaches this level, which points to the exceptional value of LeverettNet as well as a measure of the needs it will fulfill.