

Question and Answer responses from the March 16th Information Session.

These questions were either submitted in advance or asked in the information session. This document seeks to group questions and answers by topic and order them from the least specific to the most specific within each category.

Schedule

- **What are the advantages of signing up now?**

Early sign-ups allow Whip City Fiber (WCF) to be efficient in scheduling installations. In addition, WCF will schedule the customer based on the date they submitted their application, so older applications will get scheduled first when their area of town is released.

- **My question is, if TriWire is doing all the wiring and looks to be done by July. What exactly is Whip City doing other than putting boxes in homes and why the 2 month periods?**

WCF has provided best estimated times for the FSA's to be released. Once TriWire turns over the distribution plant (the network backbone that runs along the roads and terminates in the network hub), WCF will be required to do quality assurance and testing of the work that was completed. There can be periods in between released areas because network construction and testing.

A separate division of TriWire is responsible for the installation which is the actual service activation. This team will be responsible for bringing the fiber from the street (overhead or underground) to the outside of your home, mounting the "box" or ONT inside your home and then wiring a router to the chosen location.

- **If TriWire finishes early, will Whip City start to put in the internet into houses early?**

Absolutely! As far as the dates go WCF will definitely move forward sooner if we can.

- **If Charlemont received a grant from USDA for farms to be hooked up to internet, then why are farms not the first to receive the internet? My business is not scheduled until December. With the degradation of Verizon's DSL, it is making it hard to do business online.**

Charlemont received a USDA Rural Business Development Grant (RBDG) which is intended for projects that benefit small and emerging businesses in rural areas. Eight small businesses, including farm based non-agricultural business supported the grant with letters of support. Thank you!

Charlemont has farms in every FSA. The schedule was determined by our partners at Westfield Gas & Electric (WG&E) when Charlemont requested the fastest buildout order.

- **When will the roll out come to West Hawley Road? My office is closed and I have been working from my friend's house.**

West Hawley Rd is in Fiber Service Area (FSA) 02. FSA 02 the 4th area of town to be released and is estimated to be ready for installations no later than January 2022 , if not sooner.

- **I am in FSA 01 and I have signed up. I have underground utilities so I assume someone will be contacting me very soon if this is expected to be available in July?**

Yes, WCF is just starting our underground scheduling and we should be reaching out soon.

Cost

- Can you tell me more about the subsidy?

Charlemont is offering an installation subsidy of up to \$1400 during the network construction period when accompanied by a commitment to a year of service. If you sign up during the network construction period which is underway right now, subscribers will get a fourteen hundred dollar subsidy towards your installation for a single dwelling unit. For rental units there is a \$1000 subsidy for an exterior installation. Renters who sign up for service will get the free standard installation, including the interior wiring for the apartment when they sign up for a one-year subscription.

For most locations, the whole installation will be covered by the subsidy with a one-year commitment to service.

- When will it be too late?

There will be a deadline when the construction is complete so take advantage of this opportunity to get the installation cost covered. The construction period has begun and all who sign-up for service during this time will receive the town subsidy.

Construction is expected to go through 2021 and, likely through the spring of 2022. The exact date is uncertain and is tied to a flexible completion date when all installations are scheduled for Charlemont.

If you have underground utility service you should sign up to get your name on the list and make sure your drop gets installed this summer before it gets cold because by next spring we're hoping that we'll have the whole build done and there won't be any subsidies left.

- Why is Charlemont \$5 more a month than Heath?

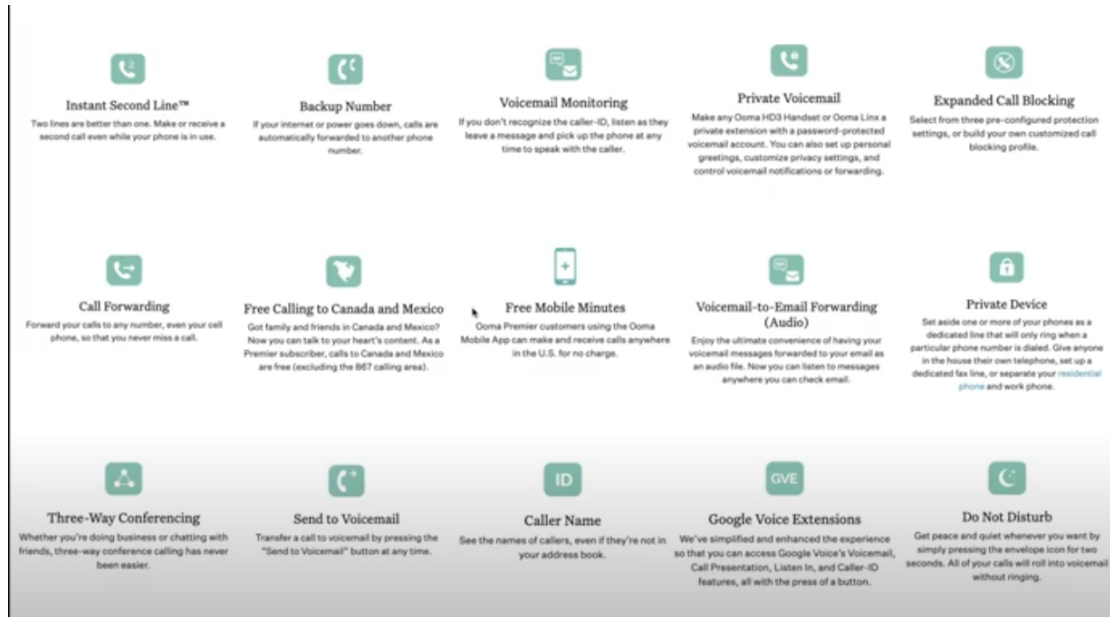
This is a town-owned network and every town is different. Every town has their own financial calculation and their own financial situation. Something that's very important in Charlemont is that we're attempting to set the price where if we get a good take rate we won't have to raise taxes at all. We hope that the network will be completely paid from subscriber fees so that's really what's driving the price point that we've set.

- Will there be senior discounts?

There will not be senior discounts. WCF will be offering a low-income discount to qualifying subscribers through the federal LifeLine program.

Phone Service

- Are all the features shown on the slide included in the monthly cost?



Charlemont's phone subscription is an Ooma Premier Voice-Over-IP phone service. All of these features are included.

- What are the rates for international calling?

If you do want to take advantage of international calling outside of Canada and Mexico, our tech support will walk you through this process. At this time you would prepay for a lump sum and then they'll just chip away based on the minutes that you use.

- Can you install the phone when you come? When do I need to decide?

The Ooma phone is compatible with your existing phone. If you subscribe to phone service, your installation will include the base device. If you have a regular phone or headsets at home for the phone it's going to work just fine with this unit.

You can add or remove the optional phone service to/from your sign-up at any time. If you have requested this prior to the installation, technicians will install the unit for you and confirm it is working properly. WCF asks that you do not discontinue phone service in advance of the installation if you are planning to keep the same phone number. Installation technicians can initiate the process of transferring the number during the installation.

- **What taxes and fees are charged on the phone service?**

There are taxes and fees that are mandated by the government to pay for the 911 service and other federal service charges that are currently running around eight dollars a month.

- **Can I keep my Verizon telephone service?**

Yes, the WCF phone service is separate and an optional add on to the internet package. You can continue to pay for a landline with Verizon and take internet service through WCF.

If you rely on a landline for alarm systems or medical alerts, these may not be supported through the WCF Ooma phone service and your Verizon line may still be needed for these services. Check with your provider.

Underground Exterior Installation

- **Can you discuss the steps to an underground installation?**

From the MST or 'tap' on the pole or pedestal, the fiber path will follow your existing utilities.

Installation of underground service requires two initial steps before your :

1. **Consultation**, an hour appointment with a technician to discuss a path for bring fiber from the street to your home.
2. **Construction**, within 1-2 weeks a technician will complete the agreed upon exterior construction and cap off fiber in a NID on the outside of your home. Coordination with the conservation commission and the town of Charlemont is a part of this step. On the first construction visit a DigSafe crew will mark the locations of underground electric underground water, etc. Depending on the contractor doing the installation the second visit will either do the trenching and another team will come in and pull the fiber through or both of these steps will be done at once.
3. We are working with the conservation commission to streamline approvals where needed. For some locations, the conservation commission may need to inspect and approve the installation after it is marked for DigSafe and prior to construction. We expect that this will be done at no cost to the homeowner.

Once the construction steps are completed, WCF customer service will call to schedule the final interior installation when the FSA is released to the town.

- **What if the cost is higher than estimated?**

If the installation cost is higher than is estimated, then the property owner can choose to accept the installation plan and the additional cost and this will be included on the first month's bill. If the property owner does not agree to the installation plan, then the subscription will be cancelled without penalty

- **Can the costs be lower than the estimate?**

Yes.

- **Am I obligated to use the recommended path to my house?**

The consultation will discuss with you any modifications to see if these can be accommodated. Homeowners will be responsible for any cost differences between the designed path and the fiber path agreed upon for construction.

- **We have a buried line to the house from the utility pole. We have solar panels and believe the company used the underground conduit . How will our internet line come to the house? Can the underground conduit be used?**

As is the case with installation, each location is unique but all underground installs will have a consultation that will provide a cost and answer the questions about reuse. My understanding is that electrical service and fiber data service cannot share a conduit but that phone or other data services can be colocated but the installation technicians will let you know for sure.

Interior Installation

- **How long does an interior installation take?**

Your in-home installation will take about an hour and a half to two hours for an underground installation after the underground construction is complete and two to four hours for aerial service. The TriWire installation crews come on time. Typically, the first appointment of the day is at eight and the the second appointment is a window twelve to one.

While at your home or business, they are there to answer any questions. They don't rush through

any of the work. It's done very thoroughly and we take pride in everything that we do, especially on your property whether it's the exterior construction or the in-home installation.

The interior equipment will need to be placed where there is a power outlet to power the fiber equipment.

- **Does WG&E have a pandemic plan for installation?**

During the pandemic, installation technicians are following COVID-19 safety protocols.

We ask you to report if anyone in your home has been ill in the past 14 days and will reschedule if that is the case. We will be practicing social distancing inside of your home or business. Our installers will be wearing gloves, masks, and protective glasses to keep everyone safe. All of our products are received factory sealed so these are wiped down so you know the equipment entering your home is clean.

We request that you also wear a mask and keep a 6' distance as is recommended for safety.

In normal times our installers would love to be closer and give you a more personalized tutorial and guide you through the process. The distance doesn't mean we're unfriendly, we're following protocols to keep everyone safe and healthy so we can go back to the way things used to be as soon as possible.

We also understand that the internet is needed now more than ever and that's why we're continuing installations safely through this pandemic.

- **Does Whip City provide battery backup devices that I can pay them to install when the broadband connection is installed?**

WCF does not currently provide battery backup devices. Uninterruptible Power Supplies (UPS) are recommended as the internet service or any internet phone service will not work without backup power. Many folks may have generators that will provide this emergency backup power.

UPS devices will also condition the line to prevent power spikes from damaging electronic equipment.

- **Since we are responsible for these battery backups, can you recommend one? How much will it cost?**

These can be purchased on Amazon or locally at stores that sell electronics. The cost is determined by the amount of time it will power the device. We recommend you purchase something that will provide at least 1 hour of backup. Name brand equipment that will support this time range starts at about \$80.

- **How far apart can the NID and ONT be placed? Is the wire between the ONT and the router regular Ethernet cable? Can you provide the router brand and model?**

This question is pretty detailed! I am not sure if you are contemplating a DIY project and if so, please do check with the install team at Whip City Fiber for the specifics. Most home installation is free with a year of service and WCF can provide you with the router at no cost (and no monthly charge) when the installation is scheduled.

The drop policy outlines the materials used in the home installation and can be found here:
here:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Z9p8iX0vQde_2zC6GhUfvWSo5954CE5EtKG43CE0rkA/edit#heading=h.nxfog7vpfy4y

Here is the section that I hope will answer some of your questions:

Interior installation

Interior installation consists of wiring the NID to an interior device called an optical network terminal (ONT) which is in turn connected to a router and optionally to a device that provides VOIP telephone service.

Standard interior installation includes:

- Installation of an ONT in the basement or on the first floor
- Installation of an optical jumper from NID to ONT in basement or on first floor
- Installation of CAT6 wire from ONT to a first-floor router location, up to 50 feet in length
- Installation of CAT6 wall-plate, if needed
- Installation of router and WiFi setup, if using the router provided
- Installation of an optional telephone interface device

Customer responsibilities:

- Customer must provide 110 volt AC electrical outlets at the ONT and router locations.
- Customer will provide any desired battery backup for the ONT and router. This might be an uninterruptible power supply (UPS) or it could be a connection to a backup generator.
- Customer is responsible for any additional wiring and for interfacing with other devices, such as computers or TVs. The ISP will provide customer support to answer questions.
- Customer must sign up for internet service to schedule an interior installation.

All provided equipment, including the NID and ONT, the supplied router and any telephone interface device, will remain the property of Charlemont Connect or the ISP.

The interior customer premises wiring becomes the property and responsibility of the customer. Any optional customer-supplied UPS or router remains the property and the responsibility of the customer.

The brand and model of the router is a Smart RG, model: SR400ac

MDUs

- **There are 2 houses on our property. One is a rental. I would want to own the connection, but have the renter pay for the service. Can that be arranged?**

Yes, we recommend that the landlord request a 'cold drop' to the rental property which will allow for a subsidy for the exterior installation. If the tenant takes service, the rental unit would receive the full subsidy up to \$1400 that would include interior wiring.

- **How are larger apartment buildings handled (those with more than four units)?**

WCF is working with the town of Charlemont to identify multi-dwelling units with more than four apartments. Charlemont and WCF will work through the landlord to coordinate the best way to bring fiber to each unit.

- **If my barn or outbuilding has separate phone/electric service, can I get the service installed there also?**

Yes, if the building has separate electric service, it will likely be included in the design for a separate installation. WCF will work with the town of Charlemont to make service available in this outbuilding if it has been included in the design.

If you have two separate electric meters and phone lines, then this would be two installations and two monthly bills.

- **I am part of a condo association. Will my neighbor have a separate fiber line or how will that installation work?**

Questions about specific locations would be best handled by a call to the Charlemont Broadband Committee, (413) 337-1199.

- **I have six children at home, each with their own devices. Is there a change for additional devices? Will this service be fast enough to support everyone? Is there a max limit that fiber can hold?**

From our FAQs: Authorized account users that are living in the same residence and their guests will be able to connect multiple devices to the service.

There is no data cap and gigabit service is about 700 times faster than your existing service.

Yes, everyone can connect to the service and we think the whole family will be very happy!

Business Pricing

- **What will the pricing be for a large business or businesses that resell internet services to customers?**

Large business pricing is being developed in collaboration with our large business customers, the town of Charlemont and WCF. To become a part of this conversation, please select large business package at sign-up.

- **We have signed up for the business package but there was nowhere to sign up for the phone option too. Is there an option for phone with the business package?**

Yes, a phone package can be provided with either class of business service.

- **For static IP address at a business (currently through Verizon DSL), will we be able to keep the current address?**

WCF cannot port over an existing IP address. Verizon has their own subnets and ours are completely different. A work-around would be using a technology called ddns which allows you to assign a name and then if the IP changes, the name reflects the change. If you are interested, you can call our Tech Team at 413-485-1204 to find out more.

- **Will Whip City entertain allowing cable programmers (such as Spectrum) to operate over the network?**

You can use any streaming TV service over the service. If your cable provider offers a streaming TV package, this can be viewed over the network.