

February 5, 2025  
National Grid  
170 Data Drive  
Waltham, MA 02451

Select Board of the Town of Charlemont  
157 Main Street  
Charlemont, MA 01339  
Attention: Jared Bellows, Kim Blakeslee, and Valentine Reid

Dear Select Board of the Town of Charlemont:

On December 9, 2024, National Grid presented the Charlemont to Heath Improvement Project to the Select Board at a pole petition hearing. The meeting resulted in a continuance, as the Select Board required more information about the project. The subsequent portion of this letter identifies the questions addressed to National Grid by the Select Board, and National Grid's responses to those questions.

### **Project Concerns**

#### **1. Broadband Relocation**

- This project includes 263 new/replaced poles in the town of Charlemont to improve reliability and safety to our stakeholders. A final strand map and detailed lists of all poles being replaced and installed is attached with this correspondence. Any new poles being petitioned should be staked in the field.
- The Aerial License Agreement – Agreement 1709 Section 8.3 & 8.4 between the Town of Charlemont/ Charlemont MLP (Licensee) and Massachusetts Electric Company d/b/a National Grid (Licensor) details that the Licensee shall not be entitled to reimbursement of any amount for transfer of pole attachments. The agreement clearly outlines the requirement for the Town of Charlemont to relocate and bear the cost of relocation of attachments due to the infrastructure improvements. It is not legally appropriate for National Grid to assume the associated relocation costs in advance. The agreement was negotiated to ensure the respective responsibilities of each party.
  - However, we understand the Town's concerns with this matter with the ability to self-perform the relocation. Per Section 8.5 of the agreement, if the Town does not relocate assets after 15 days of notice, National Grid can self-perform the relocation. If relocation does not occur within the appropriate period after notice, National Grid will complete the relocation with our resources. After completion of this work, we will discuss any costs incurred with the Town.
- Please note, Eversource has a different third-party agreement than National Grid.

#### **2. Project Need, Design and Routing**

- The driver for this project is to increase reliability to a poor performing feeder and the residents the feeder services. This work is independent of any other customer requests. This project will affect all towns currently served by this feeder: Charlemont, Heath, Rowe, Hawley, and Monroe.
- The proposed design closes a loop near the Heath and Charlemont line that provides the 1019W1 feeder redundancy and the ability to perform switching to back feed areas experiencing an outage in either town.

- National Grid is required to provide safe, reliable, and cost-effective service to our customers and the proposed route meets all the required specifications to increase reliability for the residents of Charlemont while being cost effective. National Grid has designed and will construct this project to meet the National Electric Safety Code (NESC) specifications, for the safety of the crews constructing and maintaining the assets and the public.
- Drawings provided for pole petition hearings are only required to show new poles and poles being replaced further than 3 feet away from its existing pole locations. Poles that are being replaced in the same location (i.e. Pole 27 referenced during the meeting) are not required to be shown on petition drawings.
  - Therefore, as part of this project, poles on Mountain Rd will be replaced due to asset condition and to meet design specifications but are not included in the petition as they are all replacements within 3ft of their current location.
- Additionally, there are multiple mid-span poles being proposed as part of this scope. The existing length for some pole spans is longer than National Electric Safety Code (NESC) specifications allow, so the design calls for installing a new pole in between to increase safety and accessibility of the assets. (i.e. P28-50).
- Investment recovery for this project will be through standard rate recovery mechanisms as approved by appropriate regulatory agencies.

### **3. Aesthetics**

- Double Poles
  - The National Grid and Verizon Joint Ownership Procedure (JOP) states that Verizon is responsible for all removals of jointly owned poles. In this process, other Third Party Attachers are required to transfer their assets and are notified through the NJUNS system. National Grid can create a copy account that will allow the town to be copied on all notifications to other attachers thus providing a direct contact with the next party responsible for completing their work. This will enable Verizon to be able to remove the pole sooner by expediting the transfer work necessary prior to Verizon being ready. Additionally, the town would have a direct contact to Verizon through the NJUNS system.
- Pole Height
  - The NESC specifies clearances required, which are used to determine pole heights based on the proposed load and attachments.
  - National Grid understands the concern regarding the aesthetics of pole replacements. Attached to this letter is a visual simulation of the updated infrastructure on Avery Brook Rd.

### **4. Overhead/Underground**

- National Grid has carefully reviewed the technical and financial implications of burying the lines in this area and determined it would not be the safest, most reliable and cost-effective option for the customer. This includes benchmarking with other peer utilities including Green Mountain Power and Eversource, to understand their undergrounding programs.
  - The effort to install an underground system also includes a large environmental impact due to the larger footprint of the infrastructure necessary. The larger

underground footprint can cause more damage to vegetation such as root damage and drainage issues.

- The closest National Grid crews that can install and maintain underground assets are in Worcester MA. In the case of an event, the distance the crews must travel will greatly increase any outage durations the residents of Charlemont will experience.
- Additionally, most of the properties on Avery Brook Rd currently have overhead service. Any underground service from the transformer to the house is customer owned; therefore, if National Grid were to convert this area to underground, all affected customers would be required to contract a private electrician and incur any costs related to a new underground service.

#### 5. Land & Easement Rights

- National Grid has the right to maintain and replace existing infrastructure. Any new asset being proposed in the public way is subject to approval by the Town Selectboard at a Pole Hearing which began on 12/9. The public right of way on Avery Brook Rd is approximately 49.5' wide. All proposed assets are within the public way. If there are any assets being proposed on private property, a formal easement would need to be signed and recorded with the property owner and Registry of Deeds.
- Property Values
  - National grid is not aware of any evidence of distribution lines or EMF impacting property values.

#### Non-Project National Grid Concerns

##### 1. Wireless Infrastructure

- There were questions asked regarding wireless equipment, including data collection, technical specifications, etc. There is no wireless equipment being installed as part of this project and no switches being installed on poles near 224 Avery Brook Rd.

Thank you for your continued partnership as we work towards improving the reliability of the electric infrastructure within the region. I'm available for any additional questions or comments you may have.

Sincerely,

*Joanne DeRose*

Joanne DeRose  
Director, Community & Customer Management

Cc: Sarah Reynolds  
Robert P. Ide  
Pat Shea