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## **Leverett included in Internet study**

BY SCOTT MERZBACH STAFF WRITER

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**LEVERETT** - Leverett is one of three area communities that will be studied to determine how best to bring high-speed Internet service to residents.

Pioneer Valley Connect, the local nonprofit that aims to provide high-speed Internet access to businesses, residences and communities, recently chose Leverett as the Franklin County community for what is called its Underserved Communities Pilot Project.

Jessica Atwood, a representative of Pioneer Valley Connect, announced the selection of Leverett at a meeting of the Shutesbury-Leverett Broadband Committee last week. That committee involves a group of residents from both communities who have been working since 2003 to bring high-speed Internet to Shutesbury and Leverett.

Aron Goldman of Shutesbury, who chairs the committee, said the selection of Leverett bolsters the argument that the committee has been making: that residents in both towns need high-speed Internet.

"For us, that's a big deal," Goldman said. "We are showing that the demand is overwhelming."

Atwood, who works for the Franklin Regional Council of Governments, said Pioneer Valley Connect wants to have multiple service providers in the system that will reach every household in Franklin, Hampshire and Hampden counties.

Atwood also said that the Leverett Town Hall will soon have a high-speed connection as a result of the Board of Health Internet Project. A grant will pay for the first year of service of this T1 line, she said.

Goldman said his committee has been trying to find alternatives to Verizon, which has been unresponsive to repeated requests to provide high-speed connections, he said. Other parts of the region are starting to receive upgraded technology that is better than DSL, such as fiber-to-the-home.

"Providing an alternative to Verizon is an undercurrent in everything we do," Goldman said.

The committee has been working with several companies, including Crocker Communications, which is expected to test some form of wireless high-speed Internet sometime before fall. Crocker has been endorsed by Pioneer Valley Connect as a preferred provider to build out the infrastructure that will provide high-speed Internet.

Dan Mishkind of Leverett, the vice chairman of the broadband committee, said the committee has also looked at options of having wireless towers, but is concerned about aesthetics. Both Leverett and Shutesbury have bylaws restricting cell towers that may have to be adjusted if this route is pursued.

Scott Merzbach can be reached at [smerzbach@gazettenet.com](mailto:smerzbach@gazettenet.com).