

Maple Broadband
Addison County Communications Union District

Monthly Meeting Minutes

May 5, 2021

5:00 p.m. – 6:30p.m.

VIA ZOOM

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87256123650?pwd=U05Pd3F2d2pDSWhGelNRM28xakg4Zz09>

Meeting ID: 872 5612 3650

Passcode: 102881

Join by phone: +1 646 558 8656

Steve Huffaker, Chair of Maple Broadband confirmed a quorum was present, welcomed the representatives of the member towns, and called the meeting to order at 5:05 p.m.

1. Welcome/Introductions/Roll Call

The following people were present:

Carl Siebecker, Delegate Shoreham;
Nancy Cornell, Delegate Starksboro;
Ross Conrad, Delegate Middlebury;
Steve Huffaker, Delegate Ferrisburgh;
Howard Hall, Delegate Panton;
Arabella Holzapfel, Treasurer, Ferrisburgh;
Spencer Putnam, Delegate Weybridge;
Mark Gibson, Alternate Bristol;
Ellie Hagopian, Alternate New Haven;
Paul Forlenza, Delegate Lincoln;
Rick Scott, Delegate Bridport;
Billy Sneed, Delegate Ripton;
Mark Boltz-Robinson, Delegate Monkton;
Andrew Martin, Delegate Waltham;
Mark Sheets, Alternate Bridport;
Shannon Haggett, Delegate Vergennes;
Rick Scott, Delegate Bridport;
Gary Sundstrom, Guest

Paul Nikolich, Guest Addison;

Adam Lougee, Clerk, non-member representing Addison County Regional Planning Commission (“ACRPC”).

2. **Agenda Approval.** Steve asked for additions or changes to the agenda. **Paul Forlenza asked to include an item concerning conflict of interest to the agenda and moved the agenda as amended. Rick Scott seconded the motion, which passed without dissent. Steve added conflict of interest under “Other Business”.**

3. **Adoption of April Meeting minutes:** The minutes were posted to the website and distributed prior to the meeting. **Spence Putnam moved to adopt the minutes. Nancy Cornell seconded the motion, which passed unanimously by a voice vote/show of hands.**

4. **High-level network design RFP status report:** Steve first discussed the bills in Montpelier to fund broadband development. H. 315, a relatively small funding source, has passed and will make ARPA funds available soon. Maple Broadband estimates its share of that money will be about \$170,000. H.360, a much larger source of funding (\$100M), is still being discussed and may take some time to get set up and implemented. Steve noted based upon funding availability, Maple Broadband had issued an RFP for a high-level design last month. We received 6 - 7 responses. The Executive Committee reviewed the responses over the course of the month. It narrowed the list to 4 bidders. However, it chose to ask for a further RFP from the 4 most qualified companies to bid on all pre-construction work. Steve presented some slides to explain the pre construction process (High level design, pole study and detail design). He noted we do not make any money at this preparation stage, but that costs can be significant. The Executive Board has been trying to coordinate its RFPs to be ready for funding that may come from Montpelier. The Board hopes that this will allow us to perform all pre-construction in this coming year. If we accomplish that, we could be ready for construction in the following year. Bid responses for the aggregate RFP are due on May 16th. Steve noted he expected pre-construction will cost in the neighborhood of \$3M. Steve noted that the Executive Board will review the RFP responses and try to bring a proposal to the full board at its next meeting.

Paul Folenza noted that GMP is putting up a lot of poles. He asked if we have been speaking with them. Steve noted we have had preliminary conversations and recognize we need to speak with them. Paul also noted Comcast was being slow taking down its wire/poles.

5. **Maple Broadband Operator/partner update:** Steve noted Maple Broadband continues to speak with our potential operating partner regularly, but this will not be a quick process. The Executive Committee is focused on establishing trust, and on the financial details and making them work. This Board will ultimately approve any operating agreement, but it won't be soon.

Rick Scott asked about scarcity of contractors and supplies. Steve noted it was a good concern and lead times are large. We will do the best we can to address scarcity and it has informed our discussion regarding pace. As an example, we spoke about breaking this project into small town size pieces. We chose not to do that. We want to go forward with all speed to get to the municipal bond bank financing.

Nancy noted that the legislature controls our funding, especially for pre-construction. We have

been asking them to send money as fast as possible. It remains to be seen how Montpelier will react, but we remain hopeful.

Arabella asked to review the financial needs and projections. Steve went back to his slides regarding the current legislation. He noted that we could go forward soon with some pre-construction and then look to the new organization set up by the state in H360 for additional pre-construction funding in the later half of FY2022.

Ross suggested that State buy fiber to get ahead of the supply curve. Steve noted that those discussions had been taking place. Steve noted that understanding the money and what we can stockpile or who we can work with to stockpile scarce equipment will be something the Executive Committee focuses on going forward.

6. **Financial/Grant report:** Last month Nancy noted that she was working on the following grants:
USDA \$30,000
USDA \$150,000
Hannaford \$50,000
NBRC \$1.2M for PPP

She noted that Hannaford was due next week. She also stated she hoped to hear from USDA next month. She added that she had applied for a \$5,000 grant from the Walter Cerf foundation. Lastly, Nancy mentioned we intended to compete for the \$1.2M grant for one CUD through DPS from the NBRC funds noted above.

7. **Recruitment of new members: Addison, Vergennes.** Steve reported that ACCUD membership has reached 20. Addison and Vergennes have joined and Vergennes has a delegate here tonight.
8. **Treasurer's Report:** Arabella noted Maple Broadband still had a fund balance of a little over \$26,000, or about the same as we had last month. We are currently incurring no significant costs beyond minute taking for the Executive Committee. Arabella noted we are drawing down some of our legal and other retainers and may need to replenish those funds.
9. **Clerk's Report:** None.
10. **Other Business:** Paul Forlenza asked if Maple Broadband had any conflict of interest provisions. Steve responded that we did. Andrew Martin suggested perhaps we should have each delegate to Maple Broadband sign a statement acknowledging the conflict of interest provisions. Steve noted that would be good practice. Paul noted that since he was a selectboard member from Lincoln and also a delegate he wondered whether it would be prudent for him to recuse himself if Lincoln decides to vote on whether to send any ARPA money to Maple Broadband.
Paul volunteered to ask Lincoln counsel about the potential conflict.
Steve will send Paul a copy of the conflict of interest statement.
Adam will send Steve a form that Maple could ask each board member to sign.

11. **Future Meeting:** Our next meeting will be on **June 2, 2021**.

12. **Adjourn:** Paul Forlenza moved to adjourn and the members voted unanimously to adjourn at **6:18 p.m.**

Respectfully Submitted,

Adam Lougee, Clerk