



Date Approved: July 8, 2021

Addison County Communications Union District dba Maple Broadband

Executive Committee Meeting Minutes

June 22, 2021

1:00 PM - 2:55 PM

VIA ZOOM

1. Call to order

Steve Huffaker, the Chair of the Addison County Communications Union District (“ACCUD”) dba Maple Broadband, welcomed the representatives of the Executive Committee to the meeting, and called the meeting to order at 1:04 pm.

Steve Huffaker, Chair, Ferrisburgh;
Nancy Cornell, Vice-Chair, Starksboro;
Ellie Hagopian, at large representative from New Haven;
Dan Sonneborn, at large representative from Bristol;
Magna Dodge, at large representative from Cornwall;
Arabella Holzapfel, Treasurer, ex-officio representative from Ferrisburgh;
Adam Lougee, Clerk, ACRPC;
Cy Tall, Bookkeeper;
Fyn Fernandez, Intern;
Robyn King, Minute Taker.

2. Approve the Agenda

Magna Dodge made a motion and Nancy Cornell seconded to accept the meeting agenda, all members present consented to the agenda.

3. Previous meeting minutes approval - June 8

Steve Huffaker asked for a review of the June 8 meeting minutes, and there being no additional questions or edits requested, Dan Sonneborn made a motion and Nancy Cornell seconded to approve the meeting minutes for the June 8 meeting, and the motion passed unanimously.

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4. Financial Report

a. Grants

i. *DPS round 1: Deadline May 17 costs incurred 5/16 - 7/15 - APPROVED*
Steve Huffaker explained this grant was for miscellaneous expenses and this was approved.

ii. *DPS round 2: Deadline June 2 costs incurred 7/15 - 12/31 - APPROVED*
Steve Huffaker noted there was approval for Round 2, which was for the high-level design. Nancy Cornell asked about funding levels, which Steve Huffaker noted could be discussed during Executive Session.

iii. *NTIA deadline 8/17*
Steve Huffaker explained that he, Magna Dodge, and Nancy Cornell had met to discuss Middlebury College's help on the NTIA grant and where Maple Broadband stood. Steve Huffaker noted that there was a conclusion drawn that Maple Broadband was not at a point where there was a comfort in pursuing this grant, and they would be stepping away from work on this grant moving forward. Steve Huffaker explained that this was communicated to Middlebury College and they were supportive of this development, despite their work on the effort to-date.

1. *Census blocks / Unserved / Underserved / NBAM*

Steve Huffaker explained that this agenda item pertained to the Census block analysis that Nancy Cornell had been involved with as it related to the NTIA grant. Nancy Cornell explained that although the grant was no longer moving forward, she found the work conducted in mapping by Fyn Fernandez and ACRPC to be incredibly helpful. Nancy Cornell mentioned a few follow-up items with Fyn Fernandez that she had sent along. There was a discussion of resources that Fyn Fernandez had been connected with.

b. Treasurer

Arabella Holzapfel explained that all outstanding checks had cleared and the current balance was \$26,455.01. Arabella Holzapfel noted they had not received the grant money yet.

c. Accounting Report and Recommendations

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Magna Dodge, by request of Steve Huffaker, explained that there would be upcoming grant reporting requirements, such as those that may come from Cornwall and in addition there were organizational accounting standards that would need to be kept in mind. Magna Dodge explained that she, Arabella Holzpfel and Cy Tall met to discuss accounting needs. Magna Dodge expressed her appreciation for ACRPC's services noting that an outcome of the meeting was a conclusion of a need for Maple Broadband to handle its own accounting for accountability and ease of access to information.

Magna Dodge explained that a need for this transition would be an online level 2 Quickbooks subscription, which would cost \$70 monthly with a \$35 rate for the first three months. Magna Dodge explained that Cy Tall was very familiar with Quickbooks, and when the commitment for accounting services increases there may need for an investigation of a bookkeeping firm who could assist with part-time bookkeeping. Magna Dodge noted this would be preferable to an individual part-time bookkeeper and she had a firm she was familiar with through work with the Town of Cornwall and Cy Tall had experiences with a firm in Orwell. Magna Dodge explained that a process may be to issue an RFP to solicit responses that help frame the costs and commitment.

Steve Huffaker asked if there could be multiple users for the Quickbooks account, and Magna Dodge explained she imagined that would be the case and Cy Tall did not note multiple users to be an issue. Magna Dodge noted she imagined there may be some restrictions in terms of individuals affecting transactions, and that Cy Tall was in the process of creating a document outlining financial policies which would be helpful in terms of organizational responsibilities in this space. Steve Huffaker explained he thought this was sensible, and noted that he imagined roles may expand over time, but he would like to see more resiliency in the organization so that there is not one responsible individual. Steve Huffaker noted his wife had experience in Quickbooks and may be able to step in if it was ethically possible to do so. Magna Dodge explained that Cy Tall could continue to support remotely.

Nancy Cornell asked if the migration to Quickbooks would be happening soon and also asked if staff from ACRPC might be a good back-up. Nancy Cornell also asked when Maple Broadband might expect to receive invoices from ACRPC for services rendered. Adam Lougee noted that staff from ACRPC could serve as a back-up when ready and asked for a few weeks advance notice ahead of

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the transition. Adam Lougee also clarified that ACPRC had been the recipient of \$22,000 effective May 1st to aid municipalities who were responding to COVID and he did not anticipate the need to invoice Maple Broadband as such. Steve Huffaker asked about the structure of ACPRC, and Adam Lougee clarified they were a political subdivision of the State of Vermont, similar to Maple Broadband. Steve Huffaker expressed his gratitude for ACPRC’s support, insight, and wisdom and Adam Lougee noted it was a mutual appreciation.

Steve Huffaker asked about the close out of the COVID grant content, and Adam Lougee noted that ACPRC staff were working on that in the next few days. There was discussion of logistics around reporting to the Public Service Department around the CARES moneys.

5. Operations Report

Ellie Hagopian noted there was one new person from New Haven fill out the form noting they were interested in fiber with the total number of responses since going live being 29. Ellie Hagopian continued that six new people signed up to stay in contact, with most people selecting email as their preferred method of communication, and a few noting either postal service mail or the Addison Independent. Ellie Hagopian noted there were a total of 19 sign-ups via that form since it became available. Ellie Hagopian noted in the last week, five people filled out the form expressing interest in service at their home with one in Panton, two in Ferrisburgh, one in Waltham, and one person did not specify a location.

Ellie Hagopian noted there was a decision to rotate the “Question Catcher” position each month, and this month’s volunteer raised the point that some of the people inquiring are part of the prospective operating partner’s territory. Ellie Hagopian explained there was a need to define how to answer questions from people who were potentially located in areas that Maple Broadband would not be building. Ellie Hagopian noted this could be discussed in Executive Session.

Ellie Hagopian explained that she had circulated a several page document articulating the need for a ticketing system, which could automatically log information from submissions into a database. Ellie Hagopian noted that such a system could generate historical statistics, which currently is a manual process and that there are not a lot of queries currently. Ellie Hagopian explained there were two in January, none in February, two in March, five in April excluding communications about the RFI, six in

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May, and seven in June all landing after June 15th which may correlate to marketing activities. Ellie Hagopian explained there seemed to be an uptick in interest both in fiber and in Maple Broadband’s timeline. Ellie Hagopian explained that with outbound surveys this may increase further and general feedback from the Operations Committee is that it would be beneficial to have a system in place prior to volume increasing so that there could be a timeline for members to get used to the system. Ellie Hagopian explained that originally the timeline for a ticketing system was expressed as a need for when services were rolled out, but given the size of the Operations Committee, it was a preference of the Committee to move forward on this quickly.

Ellie Hagopian explained that she had reported that almost any system could meet their needs, and it was about choosing a system that could meet the business need and was cost-effective. Ellie Hagopian explained that the JIRA platform by Atlassian was a system that two of the Committee Members were familiar with and it was free up to 3 seats which is the current and likely future need given that they will likely continue to get general queries into the future.

6. Marketing Report

Dan Sonneborn noted that after meeting with Ed Harris and Fyn Fernandez, there was a consensus to prepare a launch for a digital marketing campaign to understand, convey and message brand awareness. Dan Sonneborn noted this could be accomplished via social media and blog posts as well as user stories to find people who experienced a need for broadband during the pandemic and note why it was important to them. Nancy Cornell expressed that she would be happy to provide her experience. Adam Lougee noted that when the CARES grant was being written, they collected 50 or 60 stories from people on why they wanted broadband and what they were interested in, so he has 50-60 letters and he would be happy to send these to Fyn. Nancy Cornell noted she had updates to some of the letters that were used for the USDA grant and it was acknowledged that both sets of stories could be sent to Fyn.

Steve Huffaker asked about confidentiality and Dan Sonneborn noted they would approach people and ask a standard set of questions including whether the participant was comfortable with Maple Broadband sharing their story and fleshing out stories to build a narrative. Dan Sonneborn explained that this could be a blog post or a video and the intent was to build excitement and drive the excitement toward a pre-subscription survey which would dovetail nicely with CrowdFiber. Dan Sonneborn

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concluded that the first campaign would focus on the user stories to help generate future customers.

Ellie Hagopian noted she could send along some of the contacts from the forms submissions which may have interesting stories. Ellie Hagopian noted that one of the benefits of a ticketing system would be to integrate marketing flags.

7. CrowdFiber

Dan Sonneborn noted there was a business need for this service and that operating partners were often using it in the market. Dan Sonneborn noted that the product is CrowdFiber and this is a managed services decision of NRTC. Dan Sonneborn explained that CrowdFiber engages customers early in the process of broadband development by allowing them to enter in an address and walk them through a wizard that helps define if service exists and if not, to express interest in signing up and being notified when service is available. Dan Sonneborn noted that if service did exist if a customer searched, they could immediately sign-up. Dan Sonneborn explained this is not a pre-subscription tool, but a subscription tool with a pre-subscription management capability. Dan Sonneborn explained some of the other capabilities of the tool such as mapping areas that are served or underserved and tracking buildout. Dan Sonneborn noted other features include analysis of commercial and residential locations, miles of roads, types of service, and providers. Dan Sonneborn noted that if an operating partner is using this tool, there was a question of whether or not a subscription would be needed independently and this same logic could be used for a ticketing system, customer relationship management system, and marketing engine.

Magna Dodge asked about the cost of the product, and Steve Huffaker noted that in his review, there was a varying cost depending on the detail of the product. Dan Sonneborn noted he anticipated the package they may be interested in was \$500 a month. Magna Dodge asked if it seemed like this could be fully used at this price point, and Dan Sonneborn expressed that it could be a critical need. Steve Huffaker noted there may need to be an analysis of if Maple Broadband needed this product, at what level, and for how long which may make the investment more feasible. Ellie Hagopian noted she was curious if there were other companies that offered this type of product and if those products were more cost-effective. Magna Dodge noted that per Steve Huffaker's comment of this being a shorter-term need, her curiosity was if as a subscription tool this would be needed permanently or not. Nancy Cornell noted that she interpreted that a next step would be a discussion with the operating partner on this topic before making a decision.

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Dan Sonneborn explained that if a customer was interested in signing up for service, there would be an option of someone calling a Maple Broadband representative, but a more cost-effective option would be for that person to be able to independently sign up via CrowdFiber on the website with some automation on notification along the subscription and installation process. Dan Sonneborn noted that it was his anticipation that there needed to be a product to handle the subscription process. Magna Dodge noted she anticipated this may not be a need if the operating partner had this capability, which Dan Sonneborn agreed with, and Ellie Hagopian explained she saw this as a responsibility of the operating partner. Dan Sonneborn noted that if an operating partner was already using this service, he was curious if it could be leveraged for pre-subscription functionality.

Nancy Cornell noted she was unsure of how many people did not have service and she anticipated a need for customers to be able to sign-up via phone. Dan Sonneborn explained that he was aware that roughly 95% of customers signed up via this kind of tool, but there would be about 5% of customers on average that would need phone support.

Steve Huffaker asked how this may be related to ticketing systems, and Dan Sonneborn expressed an interest in understanding if Maple Broadband needed to independently pursue different business operations services. Dan Sonneborn noted that he anticipated Maple Broadband's data collection needs would be predicated on what the operating partner already has in place. Dan Sonneborn referenced that the business plan had specific statements on marketing activities and sequencing and he was wondering if there could be leveraging of the business partner for other types of business needs such as a customer relationship management system or ticketing systems. Ellie Hagopian explained that there may also be a question of if Maple Broadband should be directly leveraging these systems, given that there is a possibility that there could be a point in which they separate from an operating partner and database syncing could be problematic. Steve Huffaker noted that there have been discussions of information sharing with the potential operating partner so that there's consistency.

Dan Sonneborn noted that when discussing systems and process, there may need to be some thought in terms of systems accounting, as in when systems are available they may be leveraged and if not, there could be an independent system. There was agreement that this analysis made sense, and Steve Huffaker noted there could be a

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queue of these discussions with a potential operating partner. Magna Dodge noted that this would be a continuation of conversations in line with the RFP development.

Nancy Cornell asked about timing of pursuing these systems, and if it could be halted until there is an operating agreement in place or not. Dan Sonneborn noted he anticipated this could wait, and that there were a few weeks in which they would be pursuing marketing activities to drive people towards a pre-subscription engagement, and this would line up for a need for a customer relationship management system as well. Steve Huffaker noted he was sensing consensus that this was an attractive product, but there would need to be ongoing awareness of the moving parts and pieces to be discussed with a potential operating partner. Nancy Cornell noted that she was imagining more clarity in the near-term future could be important and Steve Huffaker explained this could be discussed further in Executive Session.

Ellie Hagopian noted that regardless of how Maple Broadband pursues these systems, the Operations Committee wanted to maintain simplicity and there would be an upcoming discussion of what data points they may want to collect from customers or how the systems may be set up. Steve Huffaker noted he valued simplicity given the broad volunteer base of Maple Broadband, and noted in an ideal scenario, much of the fine-grained details of operations may be taken on by the operating partner. Steve Huffaker expressed the importance of the operating agreement capturing these details for smooth future operations.

8. Other Business

Magna Dodge noted that a first draft Business Plan had been circulated, and she would like to have other comments from Executive Committee Members on this draft. Magna Dodge noted that given that this would be publicly presented, she would welcome any comments from grammatical corrections to other structural comments and this would be welcomed as soon as Members could handle a review given other workloads. Steve Huffaker noted it may be important to separate technical from editorial comments.

9. Executive Session

Steve Huffaker moved that he found that premature general public knowledge of Maple Broadband’s discussions about the operating agreement and engineering firm would clearly place Maple Broadband at a substantial disadvantage because it risks disclosure of Maple Broadband’s negotiations strategy if it were to be communicated to the public, the motion was seconded by Nancy Cornell and all members present consented to the motion.



Steve Huffaker moved to enter into Executive Session for a discussion regarding the operating agreement and the engineering firm and other confidential matters under Title 1, Section 313, Subsection A of the Vermont Statutes which was seconded by Magna Dodge and all members present consented to the motion.

10. Future Meeting: Tuesday, June 29, 1:00 PM

11. Adjourn

Magna Dodge made a motion to adjourn the meeting, and the Executive Committee adjourned the meeting at XXXX pm by consensus.

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