



Date Approved: September 9, 2021

Addison County Communications Union District dba Maple Broadband

Executive Committee Meeting Minutes

September 2, 2021

3:30 PM - 5:00 PM

**Location: 14 Seminary Street, Middlebury VT
VIA ZOOM**

1. Call to order

The meeting was called to order at 3:32 pm by Steve H.

PRESENT

Steve Huffaker, Chair, Ferrisburgh

Nancy Cornell, Vice-Chair, Starksboro

Dan Sonneborn, at large representative from Bristol

Magna Dodge, at large representative from Cornwall

Ellie Hagopian, at large representative from New Haven

Adam Lougee, Clerk, Addison County Regional Planning Commission (ACRPC)

Arabella Holzapfel, Treasurer (ex-officio)

Cy Tall, Treasurer-elect

Sharon Tierra, Minute-taker

2. Approve the Agenda

Magna D. **MOVED** / Nancy C. **SECONDED** a motion to approve the agenda as posted. Motion passed.

3. Previous Meeting Minutes Approval- August 26, 2021

Magna D. **MOVED** / Nancy C. **SECONDED** a motion to approve the minutes as drafted. Motion passed.

4. Financial

a. Grants

- Request for Proposals (RFP) for the pre-construction grant is expected tomorrow from the State. Steve H. will distribute the RFP to all and suggested that the application be approved as complete at the next meeting on September 9, followed by submission on September 10.

The group discussed the scope of the application at length, and reached consensus that the scope should include funds for legal, auditing, marketing, and bookkeeping services;

Maple Broadband Member Towns

Addison
Ferrisburgh
Monkton
Ripton
Vergennes

Bridport
Leicester
New Haven
Salisbury
Waltham

Bristol
Lincoln
Orwell
Shoreham
Weybridge

Cornwall
Middlebury
Panton
Starksboro
Whiting



and expiring subscriptions; in addition to funds for pre-construction. It was agreed that Maple Broadband (MB) should ask for what the organization knows it needs as soon as it can. Steve H. said he has all the information he needs to fill in the pre-construction part of the application. Others should add relevant information about other expenses listed above in the RFP, and that the filled in RFP be make available for review before the next meeting.

Steve H. noted that the Communications Union Districts have an 18-month window to apply for funds and that supplemental funds can be requested at any time during this window. At this time, between MB and partner Waitsfield Champlain Valley Telecom (WCVT), there are funds available from the State, in the estimated amount of \$4,068,000. Steve H. will follow up with WCVT. The plan is that MB will apply for WCVT funds later when their budget expense data is available.

- USDA application - two grants have been applied for, with no word on either one. Nancy C. will follow up.
- Grants covering administration expenses - Adam L. said that MB administration services currently being provided by Addison County Regional Planning (ACRPC) are paid by American Recovery Plan Act funds, that will eventually be all spent. He will put together a list of projected expenses for the budget for next year. It was agreed to ask Vermont Community Fund to extend the deadline for spending all funds, after submitting the report.

b. Auditor RFP update - Draft copy of the Auditor RFP has been distributed to all and a list of 10-12 potential bidders (most of whom are in Vermont) has been compiled. It was also suggested that potential bidders could be located by asking member Towns who their auditors are. Next year, MB will be required to have a higher level of audit done, a “single audit”, because it will have met the threshold of \$750,000 in spending. Adam L. said that will add about \$10,000 to the cost of an audit. The requirement that an auditing firm needs to be capable of doing this “single audit” needs to be added to the draft copy of the RFP.

c. Bookkeeper search update - Cy T. reported that the search is underway.

d. Treasurer update - Arabella H. reported that the current balance is \$42,852.68, with \$100.00 more to come in soon. In addition to a quarterly report, the financial policy states that the Treasurer provide monthly updates.

5. Operations

Maple Broadband Member Towns

Addison
Ferrisburgh
Monkton
Ripton
Vergennes

Bridport
Leicester
New Haven
Salisbury
Waltham

Bristol
Lincoln
Orwell
Shoreham
Weybridge

Cornwall
Middlebury
Panton
Starksboro
Whiting



- a. Ellie update - Ellie H. reported that the level of interest in people interested in the newsletter and in receiving service from Maple Broadband continue to increase, with at least 35 more subscribing to the newsletter, 24 more requesting service, 13 filling out the interest in fiber form, and one person who would like to volunteer by writing and editing content and contacting interested users. Dan S. said this volunteer would be an asset to Marketing.
- b. Build sequence update - Magna D. said she is working closely with Stan at ValleyNet on the business plan. Steve H. added that Vantage Point Solutions (VPS) needs clear direction from MB regarding detailed design.

6. Marketing Report

- c. “Welcome to Middlebury” update - event will take place Saturday at Town Hall Theater and MB has an information table. Magna D. will pick up a map created by John Van Hoesen at ACRPC to display at the event.
- d. Dan report - Dan S. reported that he will be meeting in two weeks with a marketing company and is also meeting with someone tomorrow for advice in how to put together a marketing RFP, which will inform how Marketing can use a content writer. Also, Dan S. has come up with a more efficient way for people to subscribe to the newsletter with direct links to the mailer link platform on each page of the website instead of people having to fill out a form.

7. Other Business

Questions concerning WCVT timelines - Ellie H. said she has been hearing from people in towns that WCVT serves, as to when they will be able to have access to broadband. Steve H. suggested MB needs to talk with WCVT and come to an agreement on talking points. Ellie H. will send Steve H. a list of questions along with her ideas about answers, and Steve will draft a set of answers. As things develop and new information comes in, these talking points should be reviewed and updated.

Insurance issues - Steve H. reported that an Umbrella Policy (excess liability coverage) is needed. He is looking into options for coverage. He will make a decision and keep everyone in the loop.

Packet for presentations to member towns - the group discussed the role of delegates from member towns and how to encourage increased engagement in MB efforts. Packets have been prepared for meetings with member towns. Cornwall leads the way in allocating ARPA funds to MB. The previous strategy of asking for a specific amount was not effective. It was suggested that MB ask the towns for a range of support appropriate to the number of miles

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Starksboro
Whiting



in that town to be served, while being open to any amount that the Town decides to allocate. Adam L. pointed out that the data on the economic return tells a powerful story and that should be emphasized. Adam L. will also speak with staff at Vermont League of Cities and Towns about modifying some recent messaging that may have had the unintended consequence of discouraging member towns from allocating ARPA funds to MG.

8. Executive Session - not needed

9. Future meeting: September 9, 2021

10. Adjourn

Magna D. MOVED / Nancy C. SECONDED a motion to adjourn the meeting. Motion passed.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:06 PM.

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Whiting