

Maple Broadband
Addison County Communications Union District

Monthly Meeting Minutes

September 1, 2021

5:00 p.m. – 6:30p.m.

VIA ZOOM

To attend the meeting via your computer or mobile device:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88108054091?pwd=K3drdUdxempoeE5GY3VGVm1aQ0tsQT09>

To attend the meeting remotely by phone, without video:

call +1 646 558 8656, Meeting ID: 881 0805 4091, Passcode: 973267

Nancy Cornell took the roll listed below.

Steve Huffaker, Chair of Maple Broadband noted we were one shy of a quorum (two delegates joined later creating a quorum), welcomed the representatives of the member towns, and called the meeting to order at 5:06 p.m.

1. Welcome/Introductions/Roll Call. The following people were present:

Steve Huffaker, Delegate Ferrisburgh; voting member
Arabella Holzappel, Treasurer, Ferrisburgh;
Dan Sonneborn, Delegate Bristol; voting member
Rick Scott, Delegate Bridport; voting member
Shannon Haggett, Delegate Vergennes; voting member
Magna Dodge, Delegate Cornwall; voting member
Mark Sheets, Alternate Bridport;
Nancy Cornell, Delegate Starksboro; voting member
Paul Nikolich, Alternate Addison; voting member
Ross Conrad, Delegate Middlebury; voting member
Carl Siebecker, Delegate Shoreham; voting member
Mark Boltz-Robinson, Delegate Monkton; voting member
Spence Putnam, Delegate Weybridge; voting member
Cy Tall, Alternate Cornwall
Kate McGowan, Lincoln

Adam Lougee, Clerk, non-member representing Addison County Regional Planning Commission

- 2. Agenda Approval.** Steve asked for additions or changes to the agenda. **Magna Dodge moved approval of the agenda. Rick Scott seconded the motion, which passed by a voice vote/show of hands as an administrative amendment.**
- 3. Approve meeting minutes August 4, 2021 (After the arrival of delegates).** **Magna moved approval. Dan seconded the motion to approve the August 4, 2021 minutes. Ross suggested**

the minutes should include the list of the vote taken. All approved the minutes as amended to include the individual voting record from the previous meeting.

4. Grant Report. Nancy noted that we did not receive a Walter Cerf grant for \$5,000. We are still waiting on two USDA grants, one for \$30,000 and one for \$150,000, and we are still waiting on all the money from S. 360, which allocates \$150,000,000 for broadband. Lastly, we are waiting on a grant for over \$8M that we applied with jointly WCVT. We may not receive it, but it shows our cooperation with our partner WCVT.
5. Treasurer's Report. Arabella Holzapfel, Maple Broadband's Treasurer, reported that our bank balance is at \$42,821.56 after receiving a portion of new grant funding and paying some bills.
6. Network Management Agreement. Steve noted we have a Network Management Agreement with our partner WCVT. Steve noted that some of our member towns expressed concerns about build rates in towns in Maple Broadband's territory, but also within WCVT's territory. Steve noted that part of the Network Management Agreement requires that WCVT will build as fast as Maple Broadband. We are currently working on getting pre-construction funding. The Vermont Community Broadband Board will be funding Maple Broadband based upon all of Maple Broadband's territory. Maple Broadband will control the funding, but for both pre-construction and construction, our grants will be based upon all 20 towns. Maple Broadband will allocate a portion of the funding to WCVT on an equitable basis with Maple Broadband. Maple Broadband will secure enough pre-construction funding for all towns.

Rick Scott asked whether Maple Broadband will control the work in WCVT's territory.

Steve said he did not believe that would work under the agreement. However, we are discussing the best way forward with WCVT. Magna and Steve also noted that Maple Broadband anticipates being the gatekeeper for any money that it provides to WCVT. Maple broadband's mandate as gatekeeper will be to represent all towns in the Maple Broadband area.

7. Pre-Construction Update. Steve Summarized, we have a window of opportunity to do the work in Maple's entire area. We expect WCVT will work with Maple to do all the pre-construction work with the funding available.

We are about a month away from completing high-level design.

After that, we will spend about \$2,000,000 on pre-construction activities. Our burn rate will be about \$50,000 a week to do all other pre-construction activities. We are planning for our worst case and hoping for the best. We need to keep moving forward with pre-construction so we can be able to build next year.

After funding pre-construction, we hope to purchase all long lead time items (Cable, electronics) so we will be ready to build next spring. WCVT will warehouse all pre-purchased equipment. In order to make this work, Maple Broadband will need money beyond the State and Federal funding. Maple needs contributions from the towns to help its long-term prospects to allow it to move fast. Given the network management agreement, the faster Maple Broadband goes, the faster WCVT must go. In the longer term, the more grant money Maple collects, the lower rates it can offer subscribers.

Magna Dodge projected that Maple Broadband will need approximately \$20,000,000 above and beyond the grants to reach full buildout. She projected that subordinated debt to fund that will cost about 8%. She also noted the faster we build, the more subscribers that we have the faster we get to the municipal bond market, where debt costs about 5%. We need about 1,000 subscribers to get to the municipal markets. We hope to do that in two years if we go fast. That will save hundreds of thousands of dollars all of which will pass on to our subscribers.

Steve will try to issue a fact sheet for delegates to solicit funding from selectboards. The fact Sheet will not include pre purchase funding, but that portion of the information will come soon.

After we receive high level design in 2-3 weeks, we will make some decisions regarding where to start first and then organize pre-construction surveys. Where to build will be driven by delivering service to unserved and underserved. It will also be driven by projected take rates and overall numbers of subscribers. We are looking to make the decision based upon Maple Broadband's best projected outcome. Those decisions may change over time.

8. Executive Session: None needed.

9. Open Meeting Resolution: We have been operating under the resolution passed last month, where by default we operate remotely, but someone may request a physical meeting. Several members requested that we re-look at that policy and comply strictly with the open meeting law and have a physical location for each meeting. **Steve moved that we rescind the resolution adopted last month. Dan seconded the motion. After a lengthy debate, the delegates voted to rescind the resolution by a 9-1 margin with one abstention. Vote by roll call follows:**
Addison: Yes
Bristol: Yes
Bridport: Yes
Cornwall: No
Ferrisburgh: Abstain
Middlebury: Yes
Monkton: Yes.
Shoreham: Yes
Starksboro: Yes
Vergennes: Yes
Weybridge: Yes

10. Other Business: No other business.

11. Future Meeting: Our next meeting will be on October 6, 2021.

12. Adjourn: **Spence Putnam moved to adjourn, and the members voted unanimously to adjourn at 6:44 p.m.**

Respectfully Submitted,

Adam Lougee, Clerk