

Approved November 30, 2021

**Addison County Communications Union District (dba) Maple Broadband**

**Executive Committee Meeting Minutes**

**November 11, 2021**

**3:30 PM - 5:00 PM**

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

**VIA ZOOM**

**1. Call to order**

Recording of the meeting was announced and the meeting was called to order at 3:31 pm by the Chair.

**PRESENT**

Steve Huffaker, Chair, Ferrisburgh

Nancy Cornell, Vice-Chair, Starksboro

Magna Dodge, at large representative from Cornwall

Ellie de Villiers, at large representative from New Haven

Dan Sonneborn, at large representative from Bristol

Cy Tall, Treasurer

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

**2. Approve the Agenda**

Magna D. MOVED / Dan S. SECONDED a motion to approve the agenda. Motion approved by show of hands/voice vote.

**3. Previous meeting minutes approval: October 14 and October 28 - tabled to next meeting**

**4. Financial**

- a. Grants update - Nancy C. reported that she is still waiting to hear about a grant from National Telecommunication and Information Administration (NTIA). Nancy C. and Magna D. have been attending webinars to learn about the USDA ReConnect Loan and Grant Program. The next cycle opens on November 24 and applications are due on February 22, 2022. Grantees have 5 years to spend funds received. Funds can be used for construction only, to build out to the households most in need and also to build the infrastructure that connects them. Grants range from \$100,000 - \$25,000,000. A 25% match is required. Nancy C. will inquire if in-kind contributions can be included in the 25% match.
- b. Auditor RFP - 2 bids have been received and were opened at the meeting: from Nathan Wechsler and Co, PA (\$15,000 through 2021 and \$25,000 through 2022) and from Batchelder Associates, PC (\$15,000 through 2021). Cy T. and Ellie dV. will read through the narratives and will report back at the next meeting.
- c. Treasurer monthly update - Cy T. reported that the current cash balance is \$151,186.99.
- d. Town contributions - Contributions from Cornwall, Ripton and Weybridge have been received. Some other towns are considering but have not committed yet. Contributions from towns are to be used for the purpose of the "deployment of broadband," per the formal agreement.

- e. Broadband subsidies - Nancy C. shared what she has been learning, as she has looked into the issue of affordability of broadband. She has spoken with Holly Groschner, who is on the Vermont Community Broadband Board and also the President of Equal Access to Broadband, Inc. The issue of affordability includes the cost of installation (about \$200) and the cost of monthly service. Subsidies for monthly service are based on income. For an internet provider to offer subsidies, the provider must be certified to do so. These subsidies rely on availability of federal funds. Waitsfield Champlain Valley Telecom (WCVT) is an approved subsidizer. Next step for Maple Broadband is to talk with Roger from WCVT for more information. Magna D. stressed the importance of staying focused on the tasks of the pre-construction phase and to engage in more in-depth discussions on this issue at a later date.

## 5. Operations

- a. VPS update - Steve H. reported that he, Ellie dV. and Magna D. met with VPS personnel. Steve said that the VPS team was well prepared for the meeting and that he was particularly encouraged by the expertise and responsiveness of Jason Wagner, Regional Outside Plant (OSP) Manager. Ellie and Magna agreed with Steve that the long meeting with VPS was positive and productive. Maple Broadband will receive a formal record of the meeting from VPS. By the middle of next month, VPS plans to have staff on the ground in the region to begin the next steps of the design process.
- b. Ellie update - one form filled out on the website (interested in fiber). Two persons made requests to receive broadband service immediately, and received the standard answer about the expected timeline.

6. Marketing - Dan S. reported that John Frieden has agreed to work as a volunteer in writing content for the newsletter and be involved in other marketing activities. Dan sent John the Annual Report and other examples of marketing content to review.

## 7. Executive Session

Steve H. MOVED / Magna D. SECONDED a motion to find that premature general public knowledge of Maple Broadband's business strategy would clearly place Maple Broadband at substantial disadvantage and risk disclosure of Maple Broadband's pending activities, if they were to be communicated to the public. Motion approved by show of hands/voice vote.

Steve H. MOVED / Magna D. SECONDED a motion to enter into executive session to discuss Maple Broadband's business strategy related to Maple Broadband's progress under Title 1, Section 313, Subsection A of Vermont's Statutes. Motion approved by show of hands/voice vote.

The committee came out of Executive Session at 5:05 pm.

## 8. Other Business

Steve H. advised that the proposal from the Vermont Communication Union District Association to purchase cable on behalf of the CUDs remains risky in current form, but Maple Broadband should watch as the proposed agreement is further developed, and keep options open for a group buying process in the future.

## 9. Future Meeting: November 18

10. Adjourn

Magna D. MOVED / Nancy C. SECONDED a motion to adjourn the meeting. Motion approved by show of hands/voice vote. The meeting was adjourned at 5:16 pm.

Submitted by Sharon Tierra, Minute-taker