

Maple Broadband
Addison County Communications Union District

Monthly Meeting Minutes

January 5, 2022

5:00 p.m. – 6:30p.m.

VIA ZOOM

To attend the meeting via your computer or mobile device:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83053038682?pwd=M1R6K2t6b1h3YkhsSzYzd29Va1Z4UT09>

Meeting ID: 830 5303 8682

Passcode: 164132

Join by phone: +1 646 558 8656

Steve Huffaker, Chair of Maple Broadband welcomed the representatives of the member towns.

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

Paul Nicholich, Delegate Addison;
Mike Sheets, Alternate Bridport;
Magna Dodge, Delegate Cornwall;
Cy Tall, Alternate Cornwall;
Steve Huffaker, Delegate Ferrisburgh;
Kate Mc Gowan, Alternate Lincoln;
Ross Conrad, Delegate Middlebury;
Hugh McLaughlin, Alternate Middlebury;
Ellie Hagopian, Alternate New Haven;
Howard Hall, Delegate Panton;
Paul Vaczy, Delegate Salisbury;
Carl Seibecker, Delegate Shoreham;
Nancy Cornell, Delegate Starksboro;
Richard Warren, Alternate Starksboro;
Shannon Haggett, Delegate Vergennes;
Spence Putnam, Delegate Weybridge;

Adam Lougee, Clerk, non-member representing Addison County Regional Planning Commission
Bill Goddard, Selectboard member from Orwell

- 2. Agenda Approval.** Steve asked for additions or changes to the agenda. Steve noted he had saved a place for Howard Hall of Panton on the agenda under “Other business” **Nancy Cornell moved approval of the agenda. Ross Conrad seconded the motion, which passed unanimously by a voice vote/show of hands.**
- 3. Approve meeting minutes December 1, 2021.** **Magna Dodge moved approval of the minutes from December. Paul Vaczy seconded the motion to approve the minutes. All approved the minutes from December’s meetings, which passed by a voice vote/show of hands.**

4. Grant Report. Nancy reported that Maple Broadband and WCVT are jointly one of two Vermont applicants for an NTIA grant of \$8,000,000 and that we expect to hear that announcement shortly. We have received a \$30,000 grant from USDA, but it will not be funded until the federal budget passes. We have our pre-construction grant for \$2.3M and will be amending that grant to ask for a little extra and asking for a Construction grant soon.
5. Town Contribution Update. Steve reported that 7 of our 20 towns had contributed. He was pleased with that to date and encouraged delegates from towns that had not contributed to speak with their selectboard.
6. Treasurer's Report. Cy gave a brief Treasurer's Report. Cy presented the expenses on the screen. She noted she expected that the year end through December should be relatively easy. **Magna Dodge moved to approve the Financial Report. Nancy Cornell seconded the motion, which passed unanimously by a voice vote/show of hands.** Steve reported we have engaged an auditor and will be working to deliver an audit before our annual meeting in May.
7. Pre-Construction tasks update. Steve stated that Maple Broadband was moving forward with its pre-construction tasks. VantagePoint Solutions ("VPS"), Maple Broadband's engineering firm, has its design work well underway. Additionally VPS has a crew on the ground in the region to field verify data. They will start down in Orwell and work north. They are currently driving the roads to ground truth the network they designed in high level design. Next they will work on pole surveying to see what work on existing poles needs to be done for us to hang fiber on those poles.
8. Material Pre-PurchaseUpdate: Steve noted we are in a hurry to purchase equipment, but we also need to wait on our engineer's findings to make sure we purchase the correct equipment. Paul Nicolich asked about build sequencing and whether we had a sequence. Steve acknowledged that we have a general idea of where it will go, but wants to wait on the engineering until he lays things out.

Ross noted we need to serve underserved areas and therefore our decisions are already laid out by our current underserved populations. Steve noted that our ultimate mandate is to serve unserved and underserved addresses. It will be a big part of the equation. However, we have other things we need to account for including our ability to tie into our operator, WCVT, economics to ensure we get people that will sign up and other engineering related factors. The decisions will be nuanced and we are not quite there yet.

Steve also noted that we are currently hiring a marketing firm to help us with pre-subscription and other marketing services. The pre-subscription will be key to where we go to help our cashflow when we start delivering service.

Ross asked Steve to help outline how we justify our decision making. Steve noted that our funder, the Vermont Community Broadband Board understands that the decision will be complicated. Maple Broadband will focus on unserved/underserved, but other variables noted above will be part of the business decision making process necessary to allow Maple Broadband to thrive.

Paul asked about our vision into WCVT's buildout. Steve showed a map where Maple Broadband will be building and where WCVT will be building. Both Maple Broadband and WCVT must

provide service to all underserved premises. Also, WCVT committed to building at the same pace as Maple Broadband. As we spend and build, they need to match our investment.

Kate suggested that when we do create our build order, it will be important for Maple Broadband to be very transparent about how we make decisions, why, and timing to make sure we earn and keep our member's trust. Steve noted we will be transparent and have good messaging. She also noted a 3 year window to complete construction is very good.

Lastly, Steve stated the Board would get the build sequence first.

9. Other Business: Steve gave an overview of the State of CUDs in Vermont. East Central Fiber has been operating for 10 years and does not need support. Several others, including Maple Broadband, will go to build this year. The remainder are not as far along and will not start building next year.

Steve noted that Google had recently been courting CUDs. Maple Broadband has met with Google twice. Steve feels Google's offer is not for Maple Broadband, but he believes several of the CUDs that are behind will work with Google and we will hear about it. Google is offering \$1,000 to defray build costs for every house passed. They will also offer service for \$55 a month. In return they get to be the provider of choice. However, Google proposes to pay the \$1,000 passing fee over a 30 year time period. Therefore, Google's proposal provides very little money up front. Also, Google will not maintain or replace equipment. Since Maple Broadband already has an operating agreement with WCVT, we are not ripe for the agreement.

Ross suggested that the Executive Committee send out a reminder to delegates to make sure we achieve quorum. Steve noted we are working on raising consciousness in the town reports. He also noted that delegates could help Maple Broadband by speaking at town meeting.

Steve also reminded the delegates that we will be asking their selectboards for them to be re-appointed just after town meeting.

Mike Sheets noted that in Bridport the delegates have asked for ARPA money and will be asking again.

Kate McGowan reported that Lincoln is also deliberating about donating ARPA funding to Maple Broadband.

10. Future Meeting: Our next meeting will be on February 2, 2022 at 5:00 p.m.
11. Adjourn: **Spence Putnam moved to adjourn. Ross Conrad seconded the motion and the members voted unanimously to adjourn at 6:18 p.m.**

Respectfully Submitted,

Adam Lougee, Clerk