

Approved March 2, 2023

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

**Executive Committee Meeting Minutes**

**February 23, 2023**

**3:30 pm - 4:00 pm**

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

**VIA ZOOM**

Recording announced.

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 3:37 pm by the Executive Director.

**PRESENT**

Steve Huffaker (Ferrisburgh) - Chair

Nancy Cornell (Starksboro) - At large

Shannon Haggett (Vergennes) - At large

Ellie de Villiers – Executive Director (ex officio)

Magna Dodge - Chief Financial Officer (ex officio)

Cy Tall – Treasurer (ex officio)

Adam Lougee - Clerk (ex officio)

2. Approve the Agenda - MOTION to approve the agenda as posted, was APPROVED unanimously by show of hands/voice vote.

3. Previous meeting minutes approval: February 16, 2023 - MOTION to approve the minutes as presented was APPROVED unanimously by show of hands/voice vote.

4. Public Comments - none

5. Chair Report - Steve H. said that he has nothing to report that is not covered later in the agenda.

6. VCBB/VCUDA status updates

- Vermont Community Broadband Board (VCBB) continues to work on Broadband Equity Access and Deployment (BEAD) funding issues as a priority.
- Auditor report is expected in the next two weeks.
- Vermont Communication Union Districts Association (VCUDA) financial working group is working on issues around outsourcing.
- VCUDA needs to figure out how to escalate resolution of problems with “make ready” delays and fees. The State of Maine has mediation process when regulated utilities and parties needing to work with them have “differing interests” but no such process exists yet in Vermont. After discussion, all said they are comfortable with specific examples of the regulated utility charging excessive fees or when there are unreasonable delays in the utility completing required work being made public.

#### 7. Affordability - Equal Access to Broadband (EAB)

The draft work plan is still in process. Ellie dV. is waiting for clarification of some details. Ellie will follow up with EAB to chart the most efficient path forward, and will ask for a corporate profile in order to understand more about the organization as a whole. After discussion about the start time with EAB, it was generally agreed that early to mid-summer may be the best time.

#### 8. Operations

- a. Launch update - Maple Broadband was officially launched, very successful press conference held at the Cornwall Town Hall, article published in the Addison Independent, and clip from the press conference was on WCAX news. Ellie dV. continues to talk with soft launch customers and get important feedback. One needed change is that the welcome letter needs to provide clear information about the charges customers will see on their first bill.
- b. Phase 1B / 1C update - Design and staking sheets are done. Pricing for 1B from Syracuse should be available soon. Permitting for 1B and 1C are being done at the same time for efficiency, focusing first on permits for new poles and railroad permits. All pole applications have been submitted. Green Mountain Power is 2 months late in processing 4 pole applications in 1B.
- c. Vergennes hub update

- Negotiations continue with owners of sites being considered and Shannon H. is working with the City Council on the possibility of Vergennes holding a Special Election to vote on the Town property option for the hub. MOTION to authorize Steve H. and Ellie dV. to offer up to \$20,000 as a one time fee for an easement for location of the Vergennes hub, was APPROVED unanimously by show of hands/voice vote.
- Steve H. has preliminary quotes for a shelter for equipment, 1 new shelter and 2 “previously deployed.” Adam L. offered to contact someone locally who builds concrete structures as another option, and Steve H. will send the specifications for the shelter to Adam L.
- Discussed alternate options to reduce the cost of the central hub. Steve reported that Maple Broadband’s engineering design decision was based on best practice from ValleyNet, to have a separate structure rather than house the central hub inside an existing building owned by a third party. Ellie dV. will follow up to find out GWI’s view on the best practice related to this, so that the Committee could consider options that might reduce the cost of the central hub and maximize the use of funds.

d. Phase 2 update - waiting for Vantage Point Solutions (VPS) to complete the pole application designs. Next steps: staking and mapping (except for the unknown location for the Vergennes hub).

## 9. Marketing

- First newsletter distributed
- Recent meeting with Pivot to discuss web hosting
- Ellie dV. signed an agreement with Pivot to include social media marketing (Facebook and Instagram) in the original retainer, at no additional cost.
- Another mailer to households in the Phase 1 area is planned.
- Adam L. asked about a business solicitation and will talk with Hannah for help identifying businesses in the Phase 1 area.
- Nancy C. added that marketing efforts to low income customers will be assisted by EAB and community partners.

## 10. Financial

- a. GMP pole applications - MOTION to approve payment of pole application fees in the amount of \$35,686.90 was APPROVED unanimously by show of hands/voice vote.
- b. Single Audit - Cy T. reported that the single audit was just about done, and the Committee should have the first draft to review early next week. Timing is on track.
- c. Financial policies update - Cy T. has compiled feedback from Magna D., Nancy C. and Ellie dV. on the working draft, and will get copies to the Committee as the next step. After discussion, it was agreed to include language that the Treasurer may delegate authority to the another individual to write checks in the Treasurer's absence.

#### 11. Other Business

Ellie dV. reported that Maple Broadband is applying to the Public Utilities Commission (PUC) for a Certificate of Public Good (CPG). A Disaster Recovery Plan must be included with the CPG application. CV Fiber has a Disaster Recover Plan that can be used as a template. MOTION to authorize Ellie dV. and Steve H. to work on the Disaster Recovery Plan and submit to the PUC was APPROVED unanimously by show of hands/voice vote.

12. Future Meeting: March 2, 2023, 3:30-5:00 pm

#### 13. Adjournment -

MOTION to adjourn the meeting was APPROVED unanimously by show of hands/voice vote.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:17 pm.

Submitted by Sharon Tierra, Minute-taker