

Approved July 13, 2023

Addison County Communications Union District (dba) Maple Broadband

Executive Committee Meeting Minutes

June 8, 2023

3:30 pm - 5:00 pm

Location: 14 Seminary Street, Middlebury, VT

VIA ZOOM

Recording announced.

PRESENT

Steve Huffaker (Ferrisburgh) - Chair

Nancy Cornell (Starksboro) - At large

Dan Sonneborn (Bristol) - At large

Shannon Haggett (Vergennes) - At large

Ellie de Villiers – Executive Director (ex officio)

Magna Dodge - Chief Financial Officer (ex officio)

Adam Lougee - Clerk (ex officio)

Cy Tall – Treasurer (ex officio)

1. Call to Order / Agenda Approval

The meeting was called to order at 3:31 pm by the Executive Director.

MOTION to approve the agenda as modified by striking GMP make-ready approvals in Financial, was APPROVED unanimously by show of hands/voice vote.

2. Previous meeting minutes approval: May 25, 2023

MOTION to approve the minutes as presented was APPROVED unanimously by show of hands/voice vote.

3. Public Comments - none

4. Chair Report - none

5. VCBB/VCUDA status updates

- a. GMP update - the meeting with the Department of Public Service scheduled for June 9 has been postponed indefinitely because of the positive results of the pre-meetings with Green Mountain Power (GMP). In those meetings, GMP executives agreed to everything that the Vermont Communication Union Districts Association (VCUDA) asked for regarding make-ready issues.

What this means for Maple Broadband: 1) if a pole is old and in poor condition, GMP will incur the cost for replacement. 2) an approved license will not be required for Maple Broadband to begin work on any pole, unless this would present a safety issue. GMP has issued a temporary license for a few poles - that will help Syracuse continue to work.

Next steps: GMP needs to document the agreed-upon plan as actionable and protections need to be put in place to prevent the old way of operating to be resumed. GMP has agreed to go through the pole applications in prioritized order on June 13 by the end of the day.

Nancy C. commended the diligence and perseverance of the work of Ellie dV. and VCUDA over the past months and weeks, regarding the make-ready issues with GMP that resulted in such a positive outcome.

- b. BEAD 5 year plan - Vermont Community Broadband Board (VCBB) has issued a Request for Information (RFI). VCUDA and all the CUDs should submit a response to the questionnaire on the VCBB website. Nancy C. will help Ellie dV. draft this response. Ellie hopes to have the intern participate as well. Deadline is June 20.

- c. Ellie dV. reported that VCUDA finally received the draft grant agreement from VCBB for VCUDA support, inclusive of a junior full time staff member at VCUDA. She signed the agreement.

6. Financial

a. Phase 1A materials sales - Steve H. confirmed that all these materials are made for use only in the telecom industry. Ellie dV. has been in touch with all the CUDS currently in construction phases. She showed the committee the itemized list of what has been sold and what is still available. 4 CUDS have purchased materials at cost and the rest confirmed they are not interested. Syracuse has indicated they can use some of the materials in the build out of 1B and 1C and will deduct the cost of materials they use from the invoice for their work. The rest of the material will need to be sold at a loss, and Syracuse has indicated that they will buy these, as well.

b. Dashboard - Cy presented the Financial Dashboard and discussed numbers and their meaning with the committee. The dashboard highlights the importance of accelerating construction and increasing the number of subscribers as quickly as possible, to cover fixed overhead. Ellie dV. is working on a revised business plan. Having more granularity in the reports from Waitsfield and Champlain Valley Telecom (WCVT) regarding the number of subscribers and installations is needed so that the committee can track the speed with which the subscriber base is growing and how quickly installations are completed. Ellie dV. has a call scheduled with WCVT to ask for their support in this.

7. Affordability - Equal Access to Broadband (EAB)

The contract is now with EAB, waiting on action from EAB. The completed registration has been received from USAC.

8. Marketing

a. Pivot retainer -the fixed 10 month retainer ended in May. Maple Broadband is now on a month to month basis with Pivot. Ellie dV. said, and Dan S. agreed, said that marketing services going forward should be less comprehensive. An analysis should be done, to maximize marketing spends, with the focus on marketing strategy, project management, social media and design services. A hyper-local marketing approach is appropriate now. Ellie dV. would like to have the intern involved with this, for example community fairs over the summer. Ellie asked the committee to be in touch with their networks to identify marketing services options.

9. Operations update

a. Phase 1A sign-ups - the count stands at 101 sign-ups in CrowdFiber, 9 sign-ups canceled, and 55 installed at the end of May. 200 addresses passed with fiber in 1A remain as potential subscribers. Efforts continue to get updated mailing addresses for 1B and 1C.

b. GMP make-ready - see GMP update above in VCBB/VCUDA status updates

c. Phase 1B/1C construction - construction has begun on the equipment pads at the hubs in Shoreham and Orwell. In a couple of weeks, the contract with Syracuse should be reviewed and revised, regarding completion of Phase 1.

d. Vergennes hub - Shannon H. reported that the meeting with the Development Review Board is scheduled on June 19. If all goes well, Syracuse may be able to begin construction on the hub in July.

e. Other - Ellie dV. is working on an amendment to the original construction grant, including an updated business plan.

10. Other Business

a. Intern Aidan Kirby begins on Monday June 12.

b. Regarding Maple Broadband's participation at the Energy Fair in July sponsored by the Vergennes Energy Committee, Ellie dV. asked Shannon H. to respond with a tentative Yes.

c. Adam L. said that Ellie dV. was praised by Christine Hallquist at the ARPA meeting this morning.

11. Future Meetings: June 29, 2023, 3:30 pm - 5:00 pm

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

The meeting was adjourned at 4:57 pm.
Submitted by Sharon Tierra, Minute-taker

