

Approved August 17, 2023

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

**Executive Committee Meeting Minutes**

**August 3, 2023**

**3:30 pm - 5:00 pm**

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

**VIA ZOOM**

**PRESENT**

Steve Huffaker (Ferrisburgh) - Chair

Carl Siebecker (Shoreham) - Vice-chair

Nancy Cornell (Starksboro) - At large

Dan Sonneborn (Bristol) - At large

Shannon Haggett (Vergennes) - At large

Ellie de Villiers – Executive Director (ex officio)

1. Call to Order / Agenda Approval

Recording announced. The meeting was called to order at 3:33 pm by the Executive Director. MOTION to approve the agenda as modified, by the addition of approval of GMP invoice under Financial, and an Executive Session at the end of the meeting, was APPROVED unanimously by show of hands/voice vote.

2. Previous meeting minutes approval: July 20, 2023 - MOTION to approve the minutes as presented was APPROVED unanimously by show of hands/voice vote.

3. Public Comments - none

4. Chair Report - Steve Huffaker - Steve H. reported that Magna Dodge is stepping away from hands-on work with Maple Broadband. She is no

longer the CFO, but will continue as delegate from Cornwall, and be available as a consultant. Ellie dV. extended her personal thanks to Magna for her invaluable contribution. Steve H. added that Maple Broadband would not be where it is today without Magna's knowledge, expertise, and insight. Nancy C. said she will miss Magna and is grateful that she is willing to be contacted as needed.

#### 5. VCBB/VCUDA status updates

a. BEAD update - the comment period on the 5 year plan has been extended to this Sunday. The CUDs continue to have concerns about the letter of credit requirement. The particulars regarding the State match are still being determined. Current needs for disaster relief funding are causing the State to call back some unspent funds.

b. Accountability policy update - strong comments about the draft accountability policy has generated a robust discussion among the Vermont Community Broadband Board (VCBB). The VCBB is continuing to hear grant applications, and is forming a couple of working groups on the policy that will include some members of the Vermont Communication Union Districts Association (VCUDA).

c. General updates - VCUDA's full time staff person starts mid-August. VCUDA will be issuing an RFI for a one year contract for financial services, including an assessment of needs, and compilation of best financial practices. The plan is for VCUDA to offer shared financial services, that the CUDs can opt into.

#### 6. Financial

a. GMP invoice - Ellie dV. previously distributed an invoice for GMP make-ready work in Ferrisburgh for committee review. She said that Matt Hubbard has reviewed and concluded it is reasonable. MOTION to approve payment of this invoice in the amount of \$54,742.33 was APPROVED unanimously by show of hands/voice vote.

b. Phase 2 construction grant update - details are still being worked out with Syracuse. Ellie dV. said she expects the contract amendment to be signed within two weeks.

c. 1A Materials sale update - An agreement in principle has been reached with Syracuse. However when Syracuse buys the materials they agreed to buy, Maple Broadband will still be left with excess material because inventory records have recently discovered to be inaccurate and Maple Broadband actually has more excess material than has been documented in the spreadsheet. WCVT and Maple Broadband are committed to working together to solve this problem, so it will not happen again. Steve H. will follow up with WCVT.

d. Ripton - still waiting to hear from the Town of Ripton.

e. Short term debt - before Maple Broadband is ready to enter the long term debt market, gap funding is likely to be needed. Ellie dV. and Steve H. heard a presentation at the latest VCUDA meeting regarding private short term debt. Ellie outlined a process - first to understand BEAD funding match requirements, and then identify firms and get prequalified for short term debt. If and when it is needed, Maple Broadband will be ready.

7. Affordability - Equal Access to Broadband (EAB) is closing its doors. VCUDA is forming a subcommittee to work on issues of affordability, including CUD policies, operator systems that manage subsidies, outreach to customers, and the role of navigators. VCUDA wants to develop a navigation system to share with the CUDs. To identify and train navigators is expected to take 3-6 months. The FCC's Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) online application is not user friendly, so it is expected that many people who may qualify for ACP assistance will need help in applying. Ellie added that Maple Broadband needs to document/codify the amounts and type of financial assistance it can offer to those who qualify for ACP.

## 8. Marketing

- a. Addison County Fair and Field Days commences next week. Aidan is working with Kurt from WCVT on Maple Broadband's booth.
- b. Aidan has been going from door to door in Cornwall and Whiting to households that have been passed with fiber and have not signed up for broadband.

- c. Ellie reported that she finally has a set of accurate addresses in 1B and 1C that have not signed up in CrowdFiber.
- d. Aidan's GIS skills are being put to good use. Recently it was discovered that the correct number of addresses passed in 1A is 318, not 304.
- e. Pivot is producing some digital market ads - Google search engine ads - soon to be released.
- f. Ellie wants to get the August newsletter out early next week, as it mentions the booth at Field Days.

#### 9. Operations update

- a. Phase 1A sign ups - 98 orders (orders minus cancellations), 65 drop installations.
- b. Phase 1B/1C construction - Cornwall 4 addresses plus addresses in the "swiss cheese holes" areas now filled, are almost ready to take delivery and be connected.
- c. Vergennes central hub - no update
- d. Other - Nancy C. asked for more information on receiving telephone service via the fiber network. After a short discussion, it was suggested this be added as an agenda item for a future meeting.

#### 10. Other Business -

- a. GoNetspeed discussions update - the survey (like a pole application) has been submitted to GoNetspeed and discussions continue to move forward.
- b. Professional organizations membership - Ellie dV. suggested that Maple Broadband join the American Association of Public Broadband will provide background information on this organization and any other organizations she recommends for the Committee to

review. Steve H. will also look into other possible organizations that Maple Broadband might join.

## EXECUTIVE SESSION

MOTION was made 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 unanimously by show of hands/voice vote.

MOTION was made 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 unanimously by show of hands/voice vote.

The Committee went into Executive Session at 4:50 pm. and came out at 5:20 pm. No action was taken.

## 12. Future Meetings: August 17, 2023

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

The meeting was adjourned at 5:22 pm.  
Submitted by Sharon Tierra, Minute-taker