

Maple Broadband
Addison County Communications Union District

Meeting Minutes

July 11, 2023 5:00 p.m. – 6:30p.m.

VIA TEAMS and live at ACRPC

1. Call to Order:

Steve Huffaker, Chair of Maple Broadband, opened the meeting at 5:00 p.m. and welcomed the representatives of the member towns, members of the public and representatives of WCVT to Maple Broadband's July meeting. The following people were present:

Mike Sheets, Alternate Bridport;
Magna Dodge, Delegate Cornwall;
Steve Huffaker, Delegate Ferrisburgh;
Ross Conrad, Delegate Middlebury;
Ellie de Villiers, Delegate New Haven;
Jim Walsh, Alternate New Haven;
Bill Goddard, Delegate Orwell;
Paul Vaczy, Delegate Salisbury;
Nancy Cornell, Delegate Starksboro;
Rich Warren, Alternate Starksboro;
Shannon Haggett, Delegate Vergennes;
Andrew Martin, Delegate Waltham.

Adam Lougee, Clerk, non-member representing Addison County Regional Planning Commission

Cy Tall, Treasurer Cornwall

Aidan Kirby, Intern Middlebury

Heidi Mahoney

WCVT:

Lee Cheney, VP Network Ops

Mark Senecal, Installation Supervisor

Liz Douillard, Customer Service Supervisor

Kurt Gruending, VP Marketing and Customer Relationships

Todd Garthaffner, Network Manager

Jim Lavoie, Manager of Information Systems and Technology

Brad Aldrich, outside plant inspection and liaison with Mission Broadband

Roger Nishi, VP

2. Agenda Approval. Steve asked for additions or changes to the agenda. He noted he wanted to add an executive session as item 7d. **Shannon Hagggett moved to approve the agenda as revised to include an executive session. Paul Vaczy seconded the motion, which passed unanimously by a voice vote/show of hands.**
3. Approve Meeting Minutes from June 12, 2023. **Ellie de Villiers moved to approve the June meeting minutes. Paul Vaczy seconded the motion to approve the minutes. The Board approved the minutes by a voice vote/show of hands. Magna Dodge abstained.**
4. Public Comments: None.
5. Chair Report: Steve Huffaker commended Ellie on her good work to keep Maple Broadband's contractors building networks.
6. Biannual Network Build Status report. Ellie noted that bi-annually WCVT joins Maple Broadband to inform delegates of the work that WCVT has been doing in Maple Broadband towns to build out its network. Ellie started by noting that at this time Maple Broadband remains at 304 network passings due to delays in make-ready earlier in the year. She expects a lot more will start coming online shortly, but until we complete splicing and testing of serving areas in Phase 1B and 1C and can hook up new customers, Maple Broadband's number will remain static.

Roger Nishi presented for WCVT. He first introduced all team members listed above. Next Roger presented WCVT's progress to date and where they intend to build in the next several years. In summary, Roger noted that WCVT had completed 1409 passings this quarter and that they are currently building in Panton, West Addison, Bridport and some of Weybridge. They have a lot more planned for construction in 2024. WCVT's reports are attached.

Roger concluded that so far, both WCVT's and Maple Broadband's network have come through the flooding in very good shape.

Steve thanked WCVT and its leadership team for attending to answer members' concerns. He noted Maple Broadband is very pleased with its partnership with WCVT.

7. Financial: Cy reviewed Maple Broadband's financial dashboard with the Board. She noted we continue to be in good financial shape.
 - a. Dashboard Ellie focused on some of the operating metrics in the report. She noted our business plan from 2022 overstates the construction we would complete at half a year, and overestimates the annual revenue per customer. For that reason it also overstates our projected revenues at this time. She expects revenues will accelerate as the year progresses. In the meantime, she noted our take rate is very good, beating predictions substantially. She also noted that when we are able to offer telephone service next

month, and she expects our average revenue per unit “ARPU” to increase to at or above our projections. Ellie noted our operations revenue remained very similar to last month and that it won’t begin to change significantly until we complete construction of serving areas in Phases 1B and 1C and can begin adding new customers from those areas.

b. Phase 2 construction - Maple Broadband’s goal is to be shovel-ready by August. Phase 1 will be significantly under budget. That will leave us a significant amount of funding to pursue Phase 2 construction.

Steve Huffaker moved that the Governing Board authorize the Executive Board to negotiate a contract amendment with Syracuse utilities awarding them an additional scope of work to add Phase 2 construction into their existing contract up to an amount of \$2.5M, subject to approval of Maple Broadband’s construction grant amendment application by the VCBB. Paul Vaczy seconded the motion. In discussion, Steve and Ellie assured the Board that Syracuse was doing an excellent job on our behalf and had earned the contract addition. **The motion passed unanimously by a show of hands and voice vote.**

c. Pre-construction sub-grant. Maple Broadband applied jointly with WCVT for its grants. Grants awarded by the VCBB were awarded to Maple Broadband based upon the work anticipated in both Maple Broadband and WCVT territory. WCVT has done a lot of preconstruction engineering and has requested to be reimbursed for \$700,000 for those pre-construction costs. **Steve Huffaker moved that Maple Broadband award a sub-grant of \$700,000 to WCVT of the pre-construction grant to reimburse them for engineering expenditures they made as part of their buildout.** After some discussion, assuring the board of WCVT’s right to receive this funding under the terms of the grant to Maple Broadband, **the Board voted unanimously to make the award.**

d. Executive Session. Steve noted that he wanted to discuss a sensitive financial/operational topic with the board.

Steve Huffaker moved to find that premature public knowledge of Maple Broadband’s business strategy would clearly place Maple Broadband at a substantial disadvantage. Magna Dodge seconded the motion, which passed unanimously by a voice vote/show of hands.

Steve then moved that Maple Broadband enter Executive Session for the purpose of discussing Maple Broadband’s business strategy and negotiations. Magna Dodge seconded the motion, which passed unanimously by a voice vote/show of hands.

The Board entered executive session at 6:06 p.m.

The Board exited the executive session at 6:25 p.m.

No actions were taken in Executive Session.

8. Marketing Report. Ellie delivered the marketing report. She and intern Aidan Kirby are focusing on local marketing. They will be at the Vergennes Energy Fair and then Field Days. They are also developing a program to sell door-to-door and finalizing a design for posters.
9. Affordability: Maple Broadband has successfully partnered with a company named Equal Access to Broadband. It helps people navigate federal applications and to receive federal subsidies for broadband services. Maple Broadband and potentially WCVT customers that need help gaining affordable access will benefit from the partnership.
10. Make Ready: All make-ready concerns are being addressed satisfactorily by GMP and we are getting rebates a for previous overpayment.
11. Phase 1 status: Syracuse Utilities is currently building Phase 1B and 1C for Maple Broadband. We are happy with their pricing and work. They now have 5 crews in the field stringing fiber and splicing.
12. Phase 2 status & Vergennes hub: Maple Broadband is almost finished with the design phase for Phase 2 of its build. Pole applications are going well with GMP (we put them in early) and the detailed design work should be done in July for an anticipated construction start date in the fall. Maple Broadband has acquired an easement for its hub, has secured its local permits from Vergennes and begun construction of the hub. It anticipates having Phase 2 shovel-ready in August ahead of schedule.
13. BEAD: BEAD is a federal funding program that Vermont intends to use to build broadband. It has a number of regulations regarding its use that Vermont is just learning. We will know more about the hoops we will need to jump through soon. However, we expect Maple Broadband will apply for BEAD funding.
14. Delegate reappointments and appointments reminder – Leicester and Whiting. Steve asked that members continue to seek out potential delegates from Whiting and Leicester.
15. Other business. None.
16. Next Meeting: September 12, 2023 at 5:00 p.m. We do not meet in August.
17. Adjourn. **Magna Dodge moved to adjourn the meeting. Nancy Cornell seconded the motion, which passed unanimously by a voice vote/show of hands at 7:06 p.m.**

Respectfully submitted,

Adam Lougee, Clerk