

**Maple Broadband**  
**Addison County Communications Union District**

**Meeting Minutes**

**January 9, 2024 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 5:03 p.m. and welcomed the representatives of the member towns and members of the public to Maple Broadband's January meeting. The following people were present:

Paul Nikolich, Delegate Addison;  
Rick Scott, Delegate Bridport;  
Magna Dodge, Delegate, Cornwall;  
Steve Huffaker, Delegate Ferrisburgh;  
Ross Conrad, Delegate Middlebury;  
Hugh McLaughlin, Alternate Middlebury;  
Ellie de Villiers, Delegate New Haven;  
Bill Goddard, Delegate Orwell;  
Nancy Cornell, Delegate Starksboro;  
Shannon Haggett, Delegate Vergennes;  
Leslie Huston, Delegate Waltham;  
Spence Putnam, Delegate Weybridge;

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

Cy Tall, Treasurer Cornwall

Kurt Gruending, WCVT

2. Agenda Approval. Steve asked for additions or changes to the agenda. **Paul Nikolich moved to approve the agenda. Nancy Cornell seconded the motion, which passed unanimously by a voice vote/show of hands.**
3. Approve Meeting Minutes from December 12, 2023. **Paul Nikolich moved to approve the December meeting minutes. Nancy Cornell seconded the motion to approve the minutes. The Board approved the minutes by a voice vote/show of hands. Rick Scott and Magna Dodge abstained from the vote.**
4. Public Comments: None.

5. Chair Report: Steve Huffaker presented a [slide show](#). In Phase 1, four serving areas remain to be completed. Steve expects two of them to be completed this month. In Phase 2, the hub is almost live. Steve also believes service areas in Phase 2 will begin to activate over the next couple of months. Phase 3, which will start as Phase 2 wraps up this year will focus on 3 areas in Orwell. *Note – portions of these are not built due to being ineligible for construction grant funding.*
6. Biannual Network Build Status Report: Kurt Gruending from WCVT provided a [report](#) on WCVT’s progress in building fiber and connecting subscribers over the course of the past year. Kurt noted that they developed over 170 miles of fiber and converted over 1000 DSL customers in 2023. Kurt shared a map showing significant progress and noted they expect to do more next year. Biannual report is available [here](#).

**Ellie noted that Maple Broadband is available to speak with any selectboards in the Maple Broadband coverage area about their progress and their plans. Delegates should speak with their selectboard and encourage a meeting if the selectboard has any questions for Maple Broadband.**

7. Financial update:
  - a. December Dashboard. Cy presented the financial statement that had been distributed to the Board ahead of the meeting. Cy noted that a large credit allowed Maple Broadband to not spend any new money on pre-construction activities. She also noted that on January 3rd (Not shown on the December report) Maple Broadband received a \$600,000 payment from VCBB for more pre-construction work. We are in good financial shape with nearly \$3,000,000 in the bank. We also expect to be paying numerous construction invoices for the work completed in the near future.

On the operational side of the business, Ellie noted subscribers continue to increase. As of December 30th, we had 144 paying subscribers. Ellie noted that our number of subscribers exceeds our business plan model, which is good, and that our Average Revenue Per Unit (Customer) “ARPU” is in line with our business model projection thanks to the fact that we are now offering phone service.

- b. Procurement. Steve presented a list of equipment that Maple Broadband intends to purchase for its Phase 3 construction. He noted that Maple Broadband had issued an RFP for the equipment and showed the results of the bids we received. He noted that Power and Tel had the low bid for all equipment. **Therefore, Steve moved to award Maple Broadband’s purchase of fiber and equipment for Phase 3 construction to Power and Tel for the price of \$282,348.66, as quoted in their response to Maple Broadband’s RFP. Nancy Cornell seconded the motion, which all approved.**

## 8. Operations Report:

- a. Service availability. Ellie noted that Item 4, the Chair Report covered most information about Maple Broadband's service availability. She did add that Since our Phase 2 build is only 70 miles, about half of our Phase 1 build, stringing the cable is proceeding much faster. However, she noted that the area is also much more densely populated, so she expected that the splicing and testing will take significantly more time to finish. She noted that our contractor, Syracuse Utilities, continues to do an excellent job and that our relationship with GMP continues to be strong and makes our licensing for poles easier than in the past.
- b. Construction. Construction is progressing nicely. We continue to move our crews and builds strategically to respond to market pressures and to spend our grant funding as efficiently as possible to reach underserved populations.
- c. Marketing. Monthly newsletters continue to drive subscriptions. Front Porch Forum has also worked well to sign on subscribers in built areas. We are working on a strategic plan for marketing and to continue to reach out to customers and manage expectations in the sensitive time between installing the fiber and installing each actual customer's service.
- d. Other. Maple Broadband continues to work to make its services affordable. The Federal Government's Affordable Connectivity Program has been a big part of our strategy. Unfortunately, that program is largely in funding limbo right now. We are not currently promoting the federal program because we do not know if the funding will run out. We are waiting to see what happens and exploring other subsidies.

## 9. VCBB/VCUDA BEAD Update.

- a. BEAD. Ellie focused this discussion on the BEAD applications. She noted both VCBB and VCUDA were focusing their efforts on preparing for this BEAD funding round. Overall, \$229 million dollars is allocated to Vermont for broadband through BEAD. VCBB is working on its Digital Equity Plan as part of a sister program to the BEAD program. Vermont has also submitted both Volume 1 and Volume 2 of its BEAD program rules to the NTIA and is waiting on feedback. Volume 1 focuses on defining "underserved" areas and addresses that are eligible to receive funding. Upon NTIA acceptance of that document, a "challenge" process will begin and last for about a month where entities may challenge whether any given address is already served or should be eligible for funding. The challenge process will take another month and the final outcome is a list of eligible addresses. Applications to serve all successful final eligible addresses will be due a few months after that.

- b. VCUDA continues to explore options for the State of Vermont to help CUDs finance BEAD applications. Maple Broadband will apply jointly for BEAD funding with its partner, Waitsfield and Champlain Valley Telecom. Maple Broadband anticipates a pre-application process no earlier than March and full application no earlier than April. Maple Broadband's budget shows that it does not expect BEAD funding until 2025.
- c. VCUDA Legislative Day. VCUDA will be in the legislature hosting an open house on January 31st. It will provide legislative testimony at that time. Board members are invited to join Maple Broadband at the legislature at that time. VCBB is also creating a video showing the process of why Vermont chose to create CUDs. A trailer of the video is available. Steve really enjoyed it. It portrays our work in a very positive light. A link to the video is here:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-Odmw5jRvpY>

10. Other business. None.

11. Delegate reappointments and appointments reminder – Leicester and Whiting. Steve asked that members continue to seek out potential delegates from Whiting and Leicester. Our upcoming construction impacts both Leicester and Whiting and we would like to have active delegates representing them participating in our activities during the build. **Ellie will meet with Leicester next Monday.**

12. Next Meeting: February 13, 2024 at 5:00 p.m.

13. Adjourn. **Paul Nikolich moved to adjourn the meeting, Ross Conrad seconded the motion, which passed unanimously by a voice vote/show of hands at 6:25 p.m.**

Respectfully submitted,

Adam Lougee, Clerk