

Approved March 7, 2024

Addison County Communications Union District (dba) Maple Broadband

Executive Committee Meeting Minutes

February 29, 2024

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

Shannon Haggett (Vergennes) - At-large

Jeff Glassberg (Waltham) - At-large

Ellie de Villiers – Executive Director (ex officio)

Cy Tall - Treasurer (ex officio)

Adam Lougee - Clerk (ex officio)

1. Call to order / agenda approval

Recording announced. The meeting was called to order at 3:31 pm by the Executive Director. MOTION to approve the agenda as amended by the addition of the matter of buried drops (6e) was APPROVED unanimously by show of hands/voice vote.

2. Previous meeting minutes approval: February 8, 2024

MOTION to approve the minutes as presented was APPROVED by show of hands/voice vote, with 4 in favor, 0 opposed, 1 abstained (Jeff).

3. Public comments - none

4. Executive Director Report - Ellie dV.

- Preparations for BEAD continue.
- The deadline for RFPs for accounting and legal services is tomorrow. Two responses (one for legal and one for accounting) have already been received.
- VCBB hopes to start the challenge process soon but has not provided an updated date.
- Phase 1 is substantially complete, after turning up the remaining service areas in Shoreham. This is a major milestone for Maple Broadband.
- The twice yearly BDC filing to the FCC, regarding service availability and number of subscribers, has been submitted.

5. Chair Report - Steve H.

- Reminder that member towns' legislative bodies need to appoint delegates and alternates to Maple Broadband's governing board. Nancy C. said she is the point person for reminding the member towns. She is waiting until after Town Meeting to do this.
- Reminder that the audit needs to be reviewed before presenting to the governing board. Cy T. and Ellie dV. are on top of this matter.
- SAM registration has been completed by Ellie (in December).
- Reminder about the by-laws update and sequence of 2 votes on the matter by the governing board. Ellie added that there is a bill moving through the legislature that, if passed, will allow for Maple Broadband to consider other changes to its bylaws and it makes sense to wait for that.
- Steve presented information about the status of construction in Phases 1, 2, and 3, showed the equipment installed inside the shelter in Vergennes, and described how it works.

6. Calls for decision/key discussion topics

a. BEAD - Ellie has the pre-challenge process list of eligible addresses. Her next step is to pull that list into Google Earth and to overlay the areas where Fidium has active service or is building. The goal is to have a sense of what might come off the table as part of the challenge process and what will not. Ellie plans to send the analysis to Vantage Point Solutions and to JSI. She added that the latest VCBB scheduled had the pre-proposal window beginning in mid-July, with the

full proposal window in September. It is critical that all final paperwork from NTIA is signed prior to January 20, 2025, Inauguration Day.

b. WCVT operations - Ellie sent out the latest weekly CrowdFiber stats. There are 123 locations that either need conduit installed or rodding (assessing the existing conduit) to be done. There are 52 aerial drops to be installed.

c. VCBB documentary - Shannon H. reported that a launch party and showing of the VCBB documentary is scheduled for April 12 at the Vergennes Opera House. The committee agreed on 6:30 pm as the event time. Jeff G. suggested offering Lulu's ice cream. Ellie said there is some swag to give away. Adam L. offered to man the sign-up table. Shannon H. said the event can be promoted through the Vergennes Partnership.

d. Pivot campaign concept review - the committee discussed Pivot's concept proposal for a marketing campaign. All agreed that marketing needs to be coordinated with WCVT's marketing and needs to be broadened to reach a wider target audience. Ellie will give Pivot written feedback from today's meeting. Ellie added that she has drafted a marketing RFP, received feedback from Nancy and Cy, and will distribute it out to a selection of marketing firms once she has compiled a list of desired bidders.

e. Buried drops - Ellie described the procedure for buried drops and discussed with the committee. The procedure includes doing rodding to assess existing conduits, and then the customer is responsible for installing new conduit, if required. The process of finding a contractor to bury conduit can seem daunting for a customer. She suggested that Maple Broadband could facilitate conduit installs to help bridge the gap between contractors and people needing buried drops. For example, pick a preferred contractor and provide the contractor with a list of 100 customers who need conduit buried. Then the contractor can contact the customers and schedule the work. Ellie added that she has a meeting on Monday with a contractor to discuss this topic.

e. Parking lot issues - the following issues were discussed:

#3 Customer pipeline analytics - CVFiber and NEK Broadband are reviewing the metrics proposed by Ellie.

#13 Sell excess 24-count cable - Ellie said she is working on an analysis of how and when to sell, and it may be that the best time is after BEAD kicks into high gear and there are materials shortages again.

7. Operations updates

a. Active service status - 187 active customers.

b. Phase 1 update - with the exception of some small line extensions, Phase 1 is complete.

c. Phase 2 & 3 update - Splicers are now working in Phase 2 area. Ellie to re-prioritized the sequence of the serving areas in Phase 2, based on sign-ups in CrowdFiber.

Phase 3 has 3 parts:

3A: cabled areas being built with Town ARPA funds and Act 71 ARPA funds.

3B: Orwell

3C: the transport route

Service activation in Phase 3 area is expected to begin at the end of March or early April. Meanwhile the work being done in the Phase 2 area involves finishing fiber installation and commencing splicing and testing of fiber.

Steve H. has been working on finding a hub location in Leicester, and is currently working with the property owner of a potential location on the west side of Route 7. A wetland permit may be needed. Ellie is consulting with CVFiber as they successfully managed a similar situation in their district.

8. Other updates

a. Financial - Cy and Ellie are getting the audit ready for review.

b. Marketing - February newsletter went out, active on social media, Ellie posted news about service expansion in Front Porch Forums in the new areas. Door hangers and welcome kits still in process.

c. VCBB and VCUDA

- Expect number of outstanding invoices to VCBB to be paid soon.
- VCBB is working on the grant amendment related to town ARPA match. VCBB requested the relevant documentation. It was discovered that Bridport never signed a contract, so the Bridport delegates are working on getting it signed.
- VCBB continues to work through the accountability policies.
- CUD bill S.199 is working through the legislature - VCUDA is focused on that.
- Subcommittee VCUDA is working to pull together a coalition in Vermont to apply for a nationwide competitive grant for digital equity.

9. Other business

a. Nancy said that people in Lincoln and Bristol have contacted her to say they are confused about when and how fiber is coming. She wonders if it is time for an article in the Addison Independent. Shannon replied that he will reach out again to the reporter who is the designated broadband person at the paper, to see about another article after reporting on Town Meeting has concluded.

b. Jeff asked about the status of the search for a new Treasurer. Ellie will follow up with Cy to see what she plans to present to the committee about the status of the search.

c. Jeff pointed out some telecommunications news items of interest: that Consolidated Communications (Fidium Fiber) has been acquired by a private investment firm, and that a man who worked as an accountant for ECFiber embezzled over \$500,000 from them.

10. Future meeting/ adjourn

Next meeting: March 7, 2024, 3:30-4:30 for bid opening and discussion

Next full meeting: March 21, 2024

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

The meeting was adjourned at 5:01 pm.

Submitted by Sharon Tierra, Minute-taker