

Maple Broadband
Addison County Communications Union District

Meeting Minutes

February 13, 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 5:02 p.m. and welcomed the representatives of the member towns and members of the public to Maple Broadband’s February meeting. The following people were present:

Mike Sheets, Alternate Bridport;
Magna Dodge, Delegate, Cornwall;
Steve Huffaker, Delegate Ferrisburgh;
Hugh McLaughlin, Alternate Middlebury;
Ellie de Villiers, Delegate New Haven;
Bill Goddard, Delegate Orwell;
Howard Hall, Delegate Panton;
Justin Boyer, Delegate Salisbury;
Nancy Cornell, Delegate Starksboro;
Rich Warren, Alternate Starksboro;
Shannon Haggett, Delegate Vergennes;
Leslie Huston, Delegate Waltham;
Spence Putnam, Delegate Weybridge;

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

2. Agenda Approval. Steve asked for additions or changes to the agenda. **Ellie de Villiers 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 January 9, 2024. **Shannon Haggett moved to approve the January meeting minutes. Mike Sheets seconded the motion to approve the minutes. The Board approved the minutes by a voice vote/show of hands. Justin Boyer abstained from the vote.**
4. Public Comments: None.
5. Chair Report: Steve Huffaker noted we continue to make good progress on construction, but otherwise deferred his Chair Report until later in the agenda.

6. Financial update:

- a. January Dashboard. Ellie presented the financial statement that had been distributed to the Board ahead of the meeting. Ellie noted projections show us spending all of our ARPA construction funding by the end of 2024. Our goal will be to replace that with BEAD funding and to keep moving forward with construction. As of now, we are in good financial shape.
- b. Procurement Phase 3. Ellie noted that she and Steve continue to review Maple Broadband's expenditures and to revise our build plans to take advantage of any surplus funding or operational opportunities. As examples, she had swapped 28 miles of building in the Vergennes area, that will be within the BEAD award territory, for similar mileage in Orwell, that will be excluded from any BEAD award, but is eligible for the use of ARPA funding. She noted she also wants to complete a fiber ring in Maple Broadband's design, which will ensure that Maple Broadband service territory will be resilient in the event of a cable break, because traffic will be able to flow the other direction. She noted that our work with Syracuse Utilities continues to be excellent. We work together well and Syracuse has kept its prices very steady since starting work for Maple Broadband. Based upon its exceptional performance to date, **Ellie moved that the Board amend Syracuse Utilities contract to include an additional \$670,026.40 of funding to allow Syracuse Utilities to extend its build to Phase 3. Steve Huffaker seconded the motion. After discussion regarding the fact that Maple Broadband will still have almost \$1,000,000 of construction funds remaining after this allocation, plus ARPA match funds dedicated, but not collected yet, the Board unanimously approved the motion.**

7. Operations Report:

- a. Service availability. On the Operational side of the business, Ellie noted subscribers continue to increase and that our actual numbers are on track with the projections in our business plan.
- b. Construction. Ellie noted that our Phase 2 build is only 70 miles, about half of our Phase 1 build, and therefore stringing the cable is proceeding quickly. Construction is progressing nicely and Ellie and Steve meet with WCVT and with Syracuse Utilities once a week to make sure things proceed on time. She gave a summary of recent work:

Shoreham 3 - We are testing now, and will go live shortly.

Shoreham 5 - Will be the next in line after crews complete Shoreham 3.

Ellie and Steve stated they 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. Splicers will move to Maple Broadband's Phase 2 construction area as soon as they finish Shoreham 5.

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 print door hangers and other direct interactions with our customers. One area of focus is to notify customers asking them to schedule the final installation once their drop has been completed. 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. None.

8. VCBB/VCUDA/BEAD Update.

a. BEAD. Ellie focused this discussion on the BEAD applications. She noted Maple Broadband will apply to BEAD jointly with Waitsfield Champlain Valley Telecom ("WCVT"). Ellie noted we secured a \$100,000 grant for legal and accounting work to help Maple Broadband work with WCVT and maximize our chances of securing BEAD funding. Maple Broadband anticipates a pre-application process in the summer and a full application in early fall. Maple Broadband's budget shows that it does not expect BEAD funding until 2025.

b. VCUDA Legislative Day. VCUDA was in the legislature hosting an open house on January 31st. Ellie and others provided legislative testimony at that time. VCUDA lobbied the legislature to restore \$20,000,000 in broadband funding that the legislature moved within the budget last year to support flood relief. VCUDA also requested that the legislature enable some changes in CUDs bylaws that will make all CUDs function more efficiently and allow for the possibility of CUDs to merge.

VCBB is also finishing a video showing the process of why Vermont chose to create CUDs. A link to the video is here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_5IILhIb7SY Maple Broadband hopes to incorporate this documentary as part of its marketing outreach in its Phase 2 territory.

9. Other business. The Executive Board expects it will bring some small bylaw changes to the Board prior to the annual meeting.

10. Delegate reappointments and appointments reminder – Leicester and Whiting. Steve asked that members continue to ask their selectboards to reappoint them to Maple Broadband for next year after the annual meeting. Ellie noted that Diane Benware, the Chair of the Leicester Selectboard, volunteered to serve on Maple Broadband's board for Leicester. Our

Phase 3 build impacts both Leicester and Whiting and we appreciate having active delegates representing them participating in our activities during the build.

11. Next Meeting: March 12, 2024 at 5:00 p.m.

12. Adjourn. **Justin Boyer moved to adjourn the meeting, Mike Sheets seconded the motion, which passed unanimously by a voice vote/show of hands at 6:12 p.m.**

Respectfully submitted,

Adam Lougee, Clerk