

## NEK Community Broadband

# Governing Board Meeting Minutes

May 28, 2020 - 5:30pm - 7:00pm

**Attendees:** See attached list of meeting participants

Evan Carlson (Chair, Sutton) called the meeting to order at 5:33 p.m.

## Agenda Review

Evan provided an overview of the meeting agenda.

## Consent Agenda

Evan provided an overview of the consent agenda.

- Approve [Organizational Meeting Minutes](#)
- Approve Regular Meeting Date/Time: 2nd Thursday of month, 5:30-7 p.m.
- Approve Letter of Support for Dept. Public Service's NBRC grant application
- FYI: Submitted Letter to Federal Delegation; Submitted Comments on Department of Public Service's proposed Emergency Broadband Action Plan

Bill Piper (Waterford) made a **motion to approve the consent agenda**. Katherine Sims (Craftsbury) **seconded the motion. Motion carried 20-0.**

## General Updates

- Executive Committee will continue to distribute an administrative bi-weekly update to the Governing Board to be shared with member town selectboards.
- CUD organizational documents have been filed with the Secretary of State.
- CUD now has a tax identification number (EID) and bank account will be set up soon.
- Letter of Intent (LOI) for the transfer of assets and nondisclosure agreement from Northern Enterprise is in draft form.
- Request for proposals (RFP) for a feasibility study went out on Tuesday all proposals should be in hand by June 11<sup>th</sup>.

- Request for information (RFI) for RDOF partners was sent out on Tuesday. VTel, GWI, and First Light have already responded. A list of questions for vendors will be shared with the Governing Board.

## Partnership Communications

- VELCO (highlines – middle mile fiber only) has over 1500 miles of fiber but lower strand count (72 versus standard 144 strands). They are interested in leasing dark fiber, e.g. 12 strands available at \$45.00/mile per month base rate...we can negotiate and potentially strand swap (equal value trade from Northern Enterprise strands). VELCO is working with Tilson and smaller distribution utilities on business planning for RDOF and we should know more about their appetite for RDOF in coming weeks.
- Bill Piper (Waterford) gave an update on the distribution utilities (DUs). Bill spoke with GMP, Washington COOP, VPPSA, Vermont Electric COOP and all agree that we need to share info and resources to ensure buildout is done in the most efficient and cost effective way. The DUs are still in the planning phase and concerned about bidding against each other for RDOF. Bill has contact info for each DU, none of which want to serve last mile, but all want to partner on middle mile. ECFiber is interested in going to RDOF on behalf of all CUDs.

## Funding Updates

Kristen Fountain (Vice-chair, Albany) gave a brief update on CUD funds.

- Broadband Innovation Grant (BIG) from Vermont Department of Public Service (VT DPS) will help us prepare for RDOF and build out entire district. Matching funds from Northern Forest Center grant and Northern Enterprises.
- USDA Rural Business Development Grant - we will get notification by mid/end of July, includes money for feasibility/engineer and CUD support staff.
- There is a State application to Northern Border Regional Commission.
- CARES ACT funding will likely be for more short-term connections geared toward students and telemedicine before the end of year and will likely be significantly less money than originally anticipated.
- US EDA has 2 pots of funding available: disaster funding for FY19 (Essex County is eligible) and EDA funding via CARES ACT. EDA has requested that State and CUDs work together on applications. There is 1.25 billion dollars available to be allocated out to subregions.

## Mission Statement, Service Goals, and Operating Principles

Nick Anzalone (St. Johnsbury) gave an overview of the CUD draft [service goals, operating principles, immediate priorities doc](#), which will be leveraged to make strategic decisions. Nick noted that now is the right time to say something if this document does not resonate with member communities and that several town representatives had already participated in feedback sessions. Nick will hold another feedback session but interested parties must RSVP in order to ensure open Meeting Law requirements are met. The Governing Board should plan to vote on a final draft at the June 11<sup>th</sup> meeting. Marjorie Kramer (Lowell) voiced concerns about wire aesthetics. Dave Snedeker asked how the document dealt with the State Emergency Broadband Action Plan (EBAP) standards that did not meet the CUD our service goals. Nick noted that the language is consistent with EBAP, however we should not sacrifice long-term goals for short-term: solutions, and attempt to provide immediate relief while prioritizing 2024 targets. Paul Fixx (Hardwick) mentioned that there has not been time to discuss the document with town selectboards and that the document needed flexibility to accommodate ongoing feedback. Nick noted that the need for immediate action is not exclusive of incorporating ongoing feedback from member towns. Mark Whitworth (Newark) suggested the CUD develop general guidelines for communicating with selectboards.

## Proposed Committee Charters and Committee Appointments

Evan Carlson (Chair, Sutton) gave an overview of the Finance Committee charter Dave Snedeker is interim treasurer. Kristen Fountain (Vice-chair, Albany) mentioned the charter is road tested as it came from ECFiber. Mark Whitworth (Newark) made a **motion to accept the Finance Committee Charter and to appoint the following members: Dave Snedeker (Chair), Kristen Fountain, Bill Piper, Michael Strait**. Noah Armstrong seconded the motion. **Motion carried 20-0.**

Evan gave an overview of the Technology Committee charter. Jennifer Barone (Burke) made a **motion to accept the Technology Committee Charter and to appoint the following members: Jonathan Baker, Noah Armstrong, Shawn Borroughs, Shaun Campbell, David Martin**. Mike Straight seconded the motion. **Motion carried 20-0.**

## New Member Towns Discussion & Executive Committee Recommendations

Evan Carlson (Chair, Sutton) gave an update on new towns seeking membership and discussed the potential formation of a Lamoille County CUD. Mark Whitworth asked for a recommendation and explanation from the Executive Committee. Dave Snedeker noted that NVDA's BIG award included the possibility of these towns joining so we should not exclude them. Malcom Doak (Kirby Alternate) voiced concern that programs designed to

benefit the NEK do not always benefit the intended beneficiaries. Kristen Fountain (Vice-Chair, Albany) noted that Wolcott and Eden were a strong fit for the western side of our CUD, as Craftsbury's network dead ends there. Katherine Sims (Craftsbury) noted that we should clarify if we are committed to serve all NEK towns and whether when a town joins could affect buildout. Kristen Fountain (Vice-Chair, Albany) noted that we will use Essex County addresses for the RDOF auction. Katherine Sims (Craftsbury) made a **motion to accept the membership of Irasburg, Wolcott and Eden in the NEK Community Broadband CUD and to table the CUD policy on accepting additional member towns.** Bill Pier **seconded the motion. Motion carried 20-0.**

### Agenda posting locations

Noah Armstrong (Glover) made a **motion to set the official Governing Board (and committee) agenda(s) physical posting locations as follows: Lyndon Municipal Offices, Brighton Municipal Offices, and Craftsbury Municipal Offices.** Kristen Fountain (Albany) **seconded the motion. Motion carried 20-0.**

### Action Items

- Set up Northeastern Vermont Development Association (NVDA) as physical location of CUD – Evan Carlson, Dave Snedeker

Jennifer Barone (Burke) made a **motion to adjourn.** [???] **seconded the motion. Motion carried 20-0.** The meeting adjourned at 7:01 p.m.