

NEK Community Broadband

Executive Committee Meeting Minutes

April 16, 2021 - 3pm - 4:30pm

Attendees: Jami Jones (clerk), Mike Strait (GB), Christine Hallquist (admin), Kristen Fountain, Evan Carlson, Nick Anzalone, Jonathan Baker, Noah Armstrong, Rep. Katherine Sims (3:14-3:29), William Piper (3:21), Kevin Fitzgibbons (NRTC, 3:31-3:45), Jeff McIver (CCI, 3:45), Jeff Austin (CCI, 3:45)

Agenda Review

Motion to add NRTC to 3:25 slot, Motioned: Noah, Seconded: Nick, Carried: (5-0)

Updates

- Action Items Check In
 - Christine Highlighting priority areas is not as big of a priority anymore.
- Administrative Update
 - \$12,000 has been approved by Northern Enterprise to help with legal operational costs and has been deposited into the account.
 - Bylaw change- Section 8 “Terms of Office: Executive Committee” section. Currently says: the chair and vice chair shall be elected for 1 year terms and are eligible to be reelected successive terms without limits” and would like to change to: “the chair and vice chair are elected for 1 year terms and are eligible to be reelected for 2 successive sessions. A chair or vice chair shall be reelected to the position if not consecutive terms.”
 - Best practice for knowledge sharing is to have a rotation and will decrease burn-out.
 - Evan will get input from the committee, Christa, and Bill Piper.
 - Looking forward: we will need to build adjustments to get people ready for newer positions so that they feel well equipped to be the “chair” or “vice chair”

- Suggested to make this Chair specific so that there is the possibility of the “Vice Chair” becoming the “Chair”
 - Deadline for next Governing Board Meeting.
- Meeting Roundup
- Finance: we will not owe NVDA as much money as we thought at first.
- Christine is still pursuing money from Kingdom Fiber and has been in contact with Rob Fish.
- Communications Committee: sent out board reappointment emails via Jami.
 - Do we still want to send out an email to the towns about partnering with them for the ARA funds? Not prepared to move forward at this point as we do not have an ISP that can support us.
 - They could create 2 short sentences to reach out to the towns initially.
- Collaborative is working with NVDA to have a regional meeting
 - VLCT has funding to help support towns. NVDA has more project support, and the Collaborative will help facilitate meetings. May have larger regional project that people could get involved in.
 - We do not want towns that we cannot serve to come to us, but also want to make ourselves available if we can.
- Conversations with CVFiber, ECFiber and ValleyNET
 - How to design and strategize around a plan for the WEC network, very early conversations.
 - Hoping to have 2 MOUs and an agreement by June to put in an application for RSBC funding.
 - Workforce question? WEC does not intend to use its own workforce, but will be taking this problem into consideration.
- League of women voters has been pushing for H360
- Ad-hoc Policy: met, Annie and the Committee are hoping to have a draft of the “Policy on Policy” for the next Executive Committee meeting to be put in front of the Governing Board that Kristen began.
- Christine’s Update

- Make ready, will we still be able to make progress this year?
 - To be addressed later.

New Business

3:25 - Concord/Waterford Update

- Kevin presented the preliminary backbone path for the network. Which will be changed to suit the NEK needs and budget
 - Deferring to the places of electric span, looking for open routes. Considering where the electric plants are or potential make ready expenses are higher or lower.
 - Gave the preliminary phases (subject to change), some areas of good density to pick up along with the underserved.
 - What sort of capital we access will inform the maps and phases. 5 years total would give us about 60 miles per month.
 - Back bone and Phase 1, part of Phase 2 would be happening simultaneously.
 - Anything shared with the committee is a work in progress and not permanent.
 - Feeders?
 - Built into the phasing, using road miles and span miles to come up with the miles, using a ratio (85%) that they have used in the past.
 - What was the density for the model? Overall average Density is 11.5 homes per mile, Craftsbury, St. Jay and Lyndonville -served areas removed.

3:45 - Consolidated Communications

- RFP- Interested in Public-Private Partnership, looking for partners, will be sent next week. How does CCI structure those partnerships?
 - The towns would take out a bond to bring service to underserved areas of the town (NH).
 - All the towns go through an RFP process. The team determines the cost and puts together a proposal.
 - Revenue bonds
 - CCI pays the bond back. (20 year agreement), plus infrastructure fee to the customer, paid over the life of the bond, given to the town to pay down the bond. No upfront cost to do the installs or the equipment, but the cost is fiber to the poles.

- Who owns the asset at the end?
 - The town owns the backbone fiber or a percentage. CCI owns the drops. Towns can run the network themselves, renegotiate a new agreement while CCI runs the network, or the town puts together a new RFP for maintenance. Would review a construction only RFP.
- NEK is trying to do an accelerated plan (buildout in under 5 years) Can you accelerate the plan with the RDOF areas? How would you work with another partner in awarded areas?
 - CCI also has an accelerated fiber plan. If there was funding available, the CCI would have flexibility. They have crews in a lot of different areas of VT this year, not as much next year.
 - Incorporating a 3rd party. Would need to take that back to the company. Current collaborations are specific, and would take a look to see how those plans overlap with CCI current plans.
- Speed targets? Pricing bans in the NH agreements?
 - Don't have in the agreements, no contracts with the customers. Offering the best price, best product that they can offer, and best service.
- Our area may be different? Our area does not have other providers, would there be some consideration around putting a cap on the cost increase per year?
 - Infrastructure fee can only go down, not up. Can review anything on the table. The pricing is consistent throughout the towns. It hasn't previously been a concern with other communities.
 - Spending money on the network core. The rings need to be large enough. Want to be able to support 10G symmetrical to the home. Tech will scale, and CCI is looking to scale as well. Looking to build up the central offices to shore up the drains.
 - 50Mgbps \$35/mo (first year, then \$55/mo) G service \$70/mo (incomplete pricing)

4:05 - NRTC Model Criteria for Decisions

- Get make-ready application process started (313 poles). Sent GIS files. Will have a meeting with Karen Cotecky to make up the applications. Hoping to export data from the map. Insurance requirements, need to update the insurance to \$5mil
Motion that the Executive Committee approve the purchase of an additional premium of \$756, the insurance necessary to meet the qualification of the department of public service and Green Mountain Power for the make-ready

application for the Concord-Waterford Project. Motioned: William, Seconded: Nick, Carried: (6-0)

- Christine is focusing on the make ready applications to get them in time with GMP.

4:15 - Kingdom Fiber Update

Talking about Kingdom Fiber and some of the changes that have taken place

Motion to go into Executive Session to discuss partnership arrangements and agreements under 1 VSA 313 with the Executive Committee, Jami Jones, Christine Hallquist, and Mike Strait. Motioned: Nick, Second: William, Carried(5-0)

Motion to exit Executive Session. Motioned: Jonathan, Second: William, Carried (4-0)

No action was taken during Executive Session. Nick Anzalone dropped off

4:25 - State Senate Strategy

- There was some concern about the H360, but they are looking at how to distribute funds to the CUDs. Hoping to see how that plays out next week.
- Who might respond to the RFP?
 - GWI out of Maine, Tilson, CCI, Waitsfield Telecom, etc. Includes construction companies.

Motion to adjourn. Motioned: Bill piper, Seconded: Katherine.

Other Business

Action Items

Adjourn

Respectfully Submitted,

Jami Jones, NEK Broadband, Clerk