

NEK Community Broadband

Governing Board Meeting Minutes

November 11, 2021 5:30-7pm

Physical Location: 142 Eastern Avenue, St. Johnsbury, VT 05819

Attendees: (see attached list)

Quorum is: 27

Role Call & Agenda Review - 2 Min

Public Comment - 5 Min

No public comment was given

Consent Agenda - 2 Min

- Approval of Meeting Minutes (10/14/2021, 10/21/2021)
- FYI: Committee Minutes, Financial Reports, etc.

Motion to approve the Consent Agenda. Motioned: Dale Urie, Seconded: Kathleen Monroe, Carried (27-0).

No discussion took place.

Updates

5:35 - Administrative & Committee Update Discussion

- No discussion on the updates provided.

5:40 - Executive Committee Action Review & Affirmation

Motion that the Governing Board affirms receipt and confirmation with no revision or alteration of Executive Committee Actions document. Motioned: Kathleen Monroe, Seconded: John Kellogg, Carried:(27-0).

5:45 - Executive Director Update

- Christa gave a short presentation of the update for the Governing Board.
 - We are officially in construction! Crowd Fiber is live (174 people input their information). The Fiber and materials arrived. Signed and had a kick-off meeting with Eustis. Pole replacements are being planned and worked on.
 - NEK secured the Lamoille FiberNet CARES fund for \$399,000. Workforce Development will come through NCIC and NVU, and an application will be

submitted for Act 71 Preconstruction funds. Amendment submitted for H315 to pay for pole application work so that we can get the make-ready started now before the rush.

- Workforce Development- we have been working to set up an apprenticeship program with VTC and other utility companies, and will be needing more workforce for various parts of construction. Also looking forward to setting up future development for these people/students/apprentices as a career.
- Scott C.- Are we marketing to recruit workers in and out of state?
 - We are currently focused on workers specifically in the Northeast Kingdom of Vermont. NCIC will put \$20K and Northern Vermont University will also be putting funding down.
 - We also met with Vermont Works for Women to increase the amount of women workers in the field.
- We have received information for the Town Resources. We identified the cabinets that made sense. Next steps are to secure each location. We will be working with Karen Kotecki to help with Right of Ways and Easements. NRTC will do a ride-out to look at the spaces. After, will be a presentation to the rep, then to the town, and an easement will be made. Next step will be where the cabinets are placed first, we may be working off of the State Fiber that we will be acquiring soon. More will be discussed about this process at the next meeting.

New Business

Nomination of Kristen Fountain as Treasurer & Nomination of Morgan Wade as Vice Chair

- We posted a job description for a part-time Grant Manager. The Executive Committee hired Kristen Fountain. She has a deep understanding of Grant management, writing and the CUD. She has stepped down from the Executive Committee and the Governing Board. The Executive Committee unanimously voted to recommend Morgan Wade for nomination as Vice Chair of NEK Broadband. The floor was opened for nominations for Vice Chair of NEK Broadband. No other nominations were made.

Motion to appoint Morgan Wade to be the Vice Chair of NEK Broadband. Motioned: Dale Urie, Seconded: Mark Whitworth, Carried: (27-0-1) (Morgan Wade Abstained).

No discussion took place.

Motion to appoint Kristen Fountain as Treasurer of NEK Broadband. Motioned: Michael Strait, Seconded: Morgan Wade, Carried: (27-0).

Approval of Revised Mission Statement

- Christa Reviewed the Redlined version of the Mission Statement. Some Key areas:
 - “Ensure” instead of provide, and “addition to e911 address served by electric utility service.” (we will be going to camps)
 - Dana- can off-grid get service in the future?
 - Christa- added “and make best efforts to locations without electric utility service with existing phone service. NEK Broadband will consider premises without electric utility service in the future.”
 - Scott- are there any locations that are tied to phones, but not electric?
 - Dana- how are we keeping the places without phone service in mind?
 - Christa will continue to fine-tune the statement, encompassing the previous sentiments.
 - David- clarification on “ensure” and “provide.” Are we competing with other Fiber providers?
 - Christa- there has been a shift. The grant funding currently focuses on the underserved and unserved. (we cannot compete with the ISPs for those areas)
 - Evan- the VCBB is not funding to overbuild fiber or cable. Only those with 25/3.
 - Christa- BEATA unserved is anything under 120. We do not have the money to overbuild in order to reach everyone, but we are also looking to the future for everyone to be able to have access to Broadband
 - Priority Addresses: are children in school.
 - Some adjustments were made to the language around open access and subsidies around alternative services.
 - Adjustments were made surrounding the language of affordability and workforce priorities.
 - Christa would like to submit this as part of the Preconstruction Grant application.

Motion to approve the updated Mission Statement with the revisions that Christa will make to refine the first point as discussed. Motioned: John Kellogg, Seconded: Dale Urie, Carried (27-0).

Update on EPP (Executable Project Plan) Mapping

Motion to find that the premature disclosure of the design and planning documentation would substantially disadvantage the CUD. Motioned: Morgan Wade, Seconded: Michael Strait, Carried:(27-0).

Motion to enter Executive Session under 1 VSA 313 to discuss the EPP and Mapping with Kristen Fountain, Christa Shute, and Jami Jones. Motioned: Morgan Wade, Seconded: Michael Strait. Carried:(27-0).

Motion to Exit Executive Session. Motioned: Michael Strait, Seconded: John Kellogg, Carried: (27-0).

No action was taken in Executive Session.

Google Fiber Presentation

- The CUD was approached by Google Fiber with an open access proposal. The proposal itself will be in Executive Session.
- What is Open access?
 - Dark Fiber: VTA network, no one licensee could hold more than 48 strands of the 144, made room for other entities. (VELCO) How open “access” it is depends on the cost and how reasonable the price is for the area.
 - Lit Services: We own the infrastructure, we light the Fiber and own the infrastructure to the home, but offer the ability for another entity to use the lit service to provide services to the customer.
 - Shared Fiber: It is “multi-plexing.” The equipment and technology will allow XGSPON and GPON on the same Fiber. No need to upsize the fiber like in dark fiber, lit fiber only one entity can access at a time. If it is split, you can put two sets of equipment on one fiber.
 - SoverNet Middle-Mile Network- was to provide open access, but the pricing was not cost-effective for “renters.”

Motion to find that the discussion of the Google Fiber proposal and the discussion of Open Access could substantially disadvantage the CUD and the parties involved, were it to be made public at this time. Motioned: Kathleen Monroe, Seconded: Dana Casperson, Carried: (27-0).

Motion to go into Executive Session to discuss the Google Fiber Proposal under 1 VSA 313 with Kristen Fountain, Christa Shute, and Jami Jones. Motioned: Mark Whitworth, Seconded: John Kellogg, Carried: (27-0).

Motion to Exit Executive Session. Motioned: Nick Anzalone, Seconded: Todd Vendituoli, Carried: (27-0).

No action was taken in Executive Session.

Break Out Groups

- What does open access mean to your group?
- What do you see as the impact and how do you feel about the Google Fiber proposal?
- How would you like to proceed with our current partners or would you like to hear more from Google?

Other Business

- 7PM Public Hearing on Budget

Adjourn

Motion to adjourn. Motioned: Morgan Wade, Seconded: Kathleen Monroe, Carried: (27-0)

*Respectfully Submitted,
Jami Jones, NEK Broadband, Clerk*