



## CV FIBER GOVERNING BOARD MEETING MINUTES

GoToMeeting (virtual meeting only)

January 26, 2021

### **Present:**

**Governing board delegates:** Allen Gilbert (Worcester), Jeremy Hansen (Berlin), Ray Pelletier (Northfield), R. D. Eno (Cabot), Tom Fisher (East Montpelier), Henry Amistadi (Duxbury), Tim Sullivan (Roxbury), Josh Jarvis (Barre Town), Lauri Scharf (Middlesex), Siobhan Perricone (Orange), John Morris (Marshfield)

### **Alternate delegates:**

**Others:** ORCA, Sam Rosenberg, Jerry Diamantides (Treasurer), Elaine Ball (Worcester), Leslie Matthews

**Called to order:** 6:05PM by Jeremy Hansen via GoToWebinar

### **Additions to the agenda:**

- Jerry Diamantides asked if a Treasure's report can be included in the next meeting agenda.
- Tom Fisher brought up the policy discussion that was tabled from the last meeting.

### **Public comment:**

- None

### **Consent Agenda:**

- MOTION (Jeremy Hansen second Siobhan Perricone) to approve the items on the consent agenda (approval of the January 12, 2021 meeting minutes). Passed unanimously (Tom Fisher abstaining). No discussion.

### **Business Development Committee Report:**

- David Healy was not on the call so there was no report.

### **Project Manager position announcement and approval:**

- Siobhan Perricone noted that the Business Development Committee has approved the listing for the Project Manager position and that the text has been sent around to the full board for review.
- MOTION (Siobhan Perricone second Tom Fisher) to approve the Project Manager position listing as approved by the Business Development Committee as drafted. Pass unanimously. Discussion:
  - Siobhan Perricone noted that we need to decide where we are going to place this advertisement.
  - Henry Amistadi noted that we are also looking into having Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission (CVRPC) do work for us and that we need to make sure that there is no overlap.

Jeremy Hansen responded that the advertisement was designed to segregate the Project Manager tasks and the administrative tasks that may be assigned to CVRPC.

- Jeremy Hansen asked where we should advertise it and how much we should spend. Jeremy Hansen noted that we have some funds earmarked specifically to hire a Project Manager. Jeremy Hansen also said that we should not advertise on LinkedIn as there was a very low signal to noise ratio. Ray Pelletier suggested VT Digger, Front Porch Forum, our website, send out a press release, Facebook, etc. Jerry Diamantides suggested 7-days.
- MOTION (Ray Pelletier second Siobhan Perricone) to approve up to \$2,500 to advertise for a Project Manager. Pass unanimously. Discussion:
  - Jeremy Hansen discussed what bucket we might be able to pull the money from to pay for this. Jeremy Hansen said that he thought that \$2,500 was probably more than needed but that he would rather have a higher cap so the people putting the advertisement out do not need to come back to the board.
  - Jeremy Hansen asked who would be putting this out. Ray Pelletier suggested that it should be a Communications Committee task.
  - Henry Amistadi suggested Vermont Business magazine.
  - Jeremy Hansen noted that advertising state-wide on front porch forum statewide would be expensive. Ray Pelletier responded that he was thinking it would just be on our personal pages.
  - Jeremy Hansen asked if we were expecting the PM to be in VT? Ray Pelletier and Siobhan Perricone said that working remotely would be an option.
  - Tom Fisher asked if we had a place on the website to post it. Jeremy Hansen said that Codewryter is very responsive and will put it up if we need it.

#### **Change of name and charter for Planning and Development Committee:**

- Jeremy Hansen shared the proposed name change and charter for the Planning and Development Committee.
- MOTION (Ray Pelletier second Jeremy Hansen) to approve the proposed updated charter and name change of the Planning and Development Committee as presented by David Healy by email. Pass unanimously. Discussion:
  - Ray Pelletier pointed out that community members who are not board members or alternates can be appointed to the Planning and Development Committee.
- Tom Fisher suggested that other committees should prepare the same sort of charter. Jerry Diamantides said that there would be one coming out soon for the Finance Committee.

#### **Policy Discussion:**

- Tom Fisher withdrew his tabled motion from the January 12, 2021 meeting.
- MOTION (Tom Fisher second Jeremy Hansen) that the Policy Committee consolidates and provides to the board in writing all active policies that have been approved by the board in whatever format they decide best. In addition, the Policy Committee will update the above policy documentation at a frequency they think is warranted but not less than yearly. Passed unanimously. Discussion:
  - Tom Fisher said that the purpose of this is to make sure that everyone knows that our policies are so we can all stay up to date on them.
  - Ray Pelletier added that the policies should be published online.

- Allen Gilbert said that he has been going through three years of minutes to collect all our policies in one place.

### **Discussion about 2021 timeline, VT Legislature, & grants:**

- Ray Pelletier noted that the Planning and Development Committee is going to be discussing the DRAFT timeline that he has prepared. This timeline was prepared based on our feasibility study and other sources where available. He noted that he has dates that imply a certain amount of certainty, but that these dates may need to be flexible. He noted that this timeline is only for the routes in the Feasibility Study; there will be much work to be done after the work specified in this timeline is complete. Ray Pelletier also noted that it would be great if WEC could build the fiber, so we do not need to carry the debt on our balance sheet. It is much easier to carry fiber lease as an operating expense.
- Jeremy Hansen noted that now the definition of “underserved” is going to be anything less than 100/100 symmetric service. Jeremy Hansen also noted that all grants from the State are going to be requiring CUD input. Jeremy Hansen also noted that the Legislature recognizes that all this work being done to change the broadband landscape in Vermont is being done by ~200 volunteers and that we need support. He said that the Legislature is considering a property tax exemption for broadband infrastructure built by municipalities. This exemption could also include incumbent for profit providers who partner with a CUD to guarantee universal coverage. Jeremy Hansen noted that he is not sure how the League of Cities and Towns and individual towns will react to this bill, but he expects that they will not be very excited.
- Jeremy Hansen noted that the 18-month turn around on the 180 miles in Ray Pelletier’s timeline is more ambitious than what was presented in the Interisle Feasibility Study.
- Jeremy Hansen also discussed the budget proposed by Governor Scott. This budget includes money for a pole inventory, but he thinks that at least for our Phase I project, we will not be able to wait for this money.
- Ray Pelletier noted that the line item in Governor Scott’s budget for a pole inventory will not go very far, as the cost to do just our territory will likely be around \$700,000.
- Jeremy Hansen noted that he owes ValleyNet a meeting to discuss the Northfield project and where we are with the operator RFP.
- Jeremy Hansen noted that we are still waiting on the \$400,000 in matching funds from the State that will allow us to apply for the VEDA loan.
- Jeremy Hansen noted that the quiet period for the RDOF auction is over soon.
- Jerry Diamantides said that he thinks that the lack of contractors to do the is critically important. He thinks that we need to be ready to move ASAP to get contracts in place so that as soon as possible so that we can be ready to move immediately as soon as funds are available.
- Ray Pelletier noted that we have already identified six possible contractors for the pole inventory so we can get that done as soon as possible. Some of these contractors also do the contractor work.
- Allen Gilbert (CHAT) this is why WEC is so important. They will be able to string fiber. They have the trucks, poles, and the workers. Jeremy Hansen agreed and noted that this will be a work force that will not be available to anyone who is not partnered with WEC.

### **Schedule Discussion:**

- Jeremy Hansen asked if the Board Members wanted to have a meeting next week to discuss Planning and Development Committee items.
- Tom Fisher said that he was concerned about burnout with having meetings three weeks in a row and thought that we should just wait until the regularly scheduled meeting on February 9, 2021.
- Ray Pelletier and Siobhan Perricone said that they did not think that there was anything pressing coming out of the Planning and Development Committee.
- Jeremy Hansen also noted that the RDOF quiet period is up this weekend, and that we likely would not be able to turn around an RDOF plan for board consideration before the 9<sup>th</sup>.
- Tom Fisher asked if the RDOF discussion would be in executive session. Jeremy Hansen said that if we are going to be discussing sensitive topics, then yes it would. Jeremy Hansen also noted that the House Energy and Technology bill also reiterates that CUDs can have trade secrets while projects are active. Those records would be released publicly after the project is complete.

### **Roundtable:**

- Henry Amistadi noted that he has emailed out the results of the Last Mile survey to all the board members and would be happy to talk to people about this. He said that there was some very powerful stuff in there for making a case to the business plan. Tom Fisher noted that ValleyNet suggested going after pre-subscriptions as soon as possible. Jeremy Hansen asked if anyone knows if the Communications Committee is working on getting presubscriptions up and running. Ray Pelletier said that he thinks it should be a question for the finance committee. TS suggested that we should reach out to people who entered questions into the survey comments.
- Allen Gilbert noted that he has had some inquiries about StarLink, and he thinks it is curious that he has not heard any mention of them in testimony to the legislature. He said that he thinks they are our main competitor. Jeremy Hansen thinks that it is going to be a shared bandwidth and the more people are connected the worse the service is going to be. TS said that he would not underestimate their technology and that he thinks they might be close to as good as fiber.
- Ray Pelletier reported that the pole inventory RFP will be going live on February 1, 2021.

### **Meeting Adjourned at 7:19PM**

Respectfully submitted,  
Jeremy Matt, Clerk