



## **CV FIBER PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES**

GoToMeeting (virtual meeting only)

January 28, 2021

### **Members Present:**

Michael Birnbaum (Plainfield), David Healy (Calais), Jeremy Matt (Plainfield), Ray Pelletier (Northfield), Jerry Diamantides (Treasurer), Siobhan Perricone (Orange), Kenneth Jones (Montpelier)

### **Others Present:**

Henry Amistadi (Duxbury), Tom Fisher (East Montpelier), John Morris (Marshfield), Phil Cecchini (Barre Town)

**Called to order:** 5:31PM by David Healy via GoToMeeting

### **Additions to the Agenda:**

- Jeremy Matt asked about the status of the December 17, 2020 minutes. David Healy said that he would have to investigate that and get back to the committee.
- Ray Pelletier said that he would like to add a call for volunteers.
- Ken Jones asked if we could discuss WEC and where they are in terms of building fiber.

### **Public comment:**

- None

### **Approval of the January 21, 2020 meeting minutes:**

- MOTION (Jeremy Matt second Siobhan Perricone) to approve the January 21, 2020 minutes as drafted. No discussion. Passed unanimously.

### **CVRPC Proposal for CVFiber Admin Support:**

- MOTION (Ray Pelletier second Jeremy Matt) to approve Ray Pelletier's proposal (sent via email) to the board as drafted. Passed Unanimously. Discussion:
  - Ray Pelletier summarized the proposal.
  - Siobhan Perricone asked about the distinction between Project Manager work and the tasks in the CVRPC proposal.
  - Jerry Diamantides asked how the billing would work. Ray Pelletier responded that the contract is "as requested" and that we would pay them an hourly rate for work that we request they do.

- Jeremy Matt said that he would be glad to hand off preparation of meeting minutes and at the same time stop collecting the Clerk stipend (although he would remain Clerk on a volunteer basis)
- Michael Birnbaum noted that there need to be controls as this could add up to a lot of money if they do everything on the list. It would also be a good idea to get references to make sure they do good work.

### **AmeriCorps Opportunity-Letter of Interest:**

- MOTION (David Healy second Siobhan Perricone) Motion: Recommend to the Board that we submit a letter of intent/application to explore the possibility of recruiting an AmeriCorps Person at a cost \$6,000/year (as amended). Pass unanimously. Discussion:
  - Siobhan Perricone said that she has concerns that we might be asking them to do things that AmeriCorps does not do. Ken Jones said that he agrees – AmeriCorps need to be given projects not a series of disconnected tasks.
  - Jeremy Matt suggested possibly having them work with the Project Manager.
  - Henry Amistadi suggested tasking them a customer communication and seeing how far they can take it.
  - Jerry Diamantides said that he thought AmeriCorps might be more work (at least up front) than we would get out of the volunteer.
  - Michael Birnbaum agreed with Jerry Diamantides' concern but thought that we should submit the letter of intent so we can keep the door open and explore the possibility.
  - Siobhan Perricone asked who would be taking this on. She pointed out that we are very short on volunteer time.
  - Ray Pelletier suggested removing the duties from the motion. David Healy accepted this as a friendly amendment.

### **Construction Schedule Outline/Discussion:**

- Ray Pelletier shared the proposed schedule he came up with. Michael Birnbaum noted that he thinks that the projections are probably optimistic, but he thinks that it is better to be optimistic. Ray Pelletier said that he has made a lot of assumptions, but that he has tried to provide sources for his assumptions where available. Ray Pelletier provided a substantial explanation of the benefits of having a framework for planning into the future. Jerry Diamantides and Tom Fisher spoke in support of the schedule.
- Jerry Diamantides asked if Michael Birnbaum has a conflict of interest in having Michael discuss this schedule. Michael Birnbaum said that he does not think he has a conflict of interest in terms of discussing the process and the general timeline of CVFiber construction. He said that he has been and will continue to be very careful to avoid discussing anything that would benefit or affect his company. He also mentioned that he has had offline discussions about resigning his board position, but that he wants to keep providing support and advice to CVFiber as long as possible. Jerry Diamantides responded that he also thought there was no conflict of interest, but that he wanted the record to reflect that this discussion had taken place.
- Next steps called out by Tom Fisher, Ray Pelletier, and Ken Jones: Break the schedule out into a long-term, month-by-month budget, bringing in funding, subscriptions, presubscriptions, outreach, etc. IDIQ

contracts need to be put in place for make-ready work while pole inventory is happening, whether we have contractors do it or it is the Utilities. We also need contracts for Operator(s) lined up by this summer.

- Michael Birnbaum pointed out that we need to really make a choice on what the Phase 1 routes are. Starting on Saturday when the RDOF freeze is over we can begin those discussions.
- Jeremy Hansen said that he is concerned about the overlap of the initial phases. VEDA needs us to request money for a “project”, so we need to make sure that whatever we put to them is accurate. He is not sure we can put Phase Two work into a Phase One project request. Michael and Ray spoke up to say they believe that we should be able to include it and it is not very much money compared to the rest.
- Phil Cecchini said that more money will still be needed, and we must keep an eye on where those additional funds will come from.

#### **CUD Grant Update on FTTP Projects:**

- David Healy said that there is not much to report now. There are some RFPs required, but we still need to hear more from Rob Fish. David will report back next time.

#### **NBRC Grant Letter of Intent:**

- No update, David Healy said that he will have something next time.

#### **Call for Volunteers:**

- Ray Pelletier said he thinks we should use our new list of volunteers from the survey. We could send letters of interest to folks and then review and make recommendations to the board to appoint them to different committees.
- Tom Fisher said he will volunteer for the Planning and Development Committee. Phil Cecchini also showed interest.

#### **Discussion of WEC Status:**

- David Healy reported that WEC has a meeting coming up quickly which will include several interesting points including running fiber up through East Montpelier thru Maple Corners to Calais. He expects to report back on this at the next Planning and Development Committee Meeting.
- David suggested that Henry Amistadi should provide a presentation of the survey results to the board at the next meeting and asked if there is a way for Henry to share Tableau data privately to the various board members. Henry responded that he is not able to provide the data securely but will consider creating summaries by town. However, that may be a lot of work. David Healy pointed out how important the survey results are and that they feed into many other activities.

#### **Roundtable:**

- Michael noted that Karen Horn’s Vermont League of Cities and Towns testimony was unfortunately not very wholistic in its approach to the topic of tax exclusions for fiber. Someone should clarify to the legislature that they are not losing current revenue, but that the town would simply not be increasing their revenue based on fiber-based property taxes.

- Jeremy Hansen noted that Karen Horn’s argument also hides the point that this will over all bring in revenue to the region and that will in turn bring in tax revenue as well.
- Ray Pelletier noted that excluding public entities from broadband infrastructure tax also lets the utilities offer lease plans we can afford. Or the state could tax it but use the funds towards building out broadband, though it would be backwards.
- Ken Jones noted that Governor Scott is trying to bring in \$20 million for broadband development. We need to get a better focus on what that is and how to fit it into our plans.

**Meeting Adjourned at 7:07PM**

Respectfully submitted,  
Jeremy Matt, Clerk

DRAFT