

Vermont Community Broadband Board Meeting

Monday, March 13th, 2023, 12:00pm – 4:00pm

Approved Minutes

I. Meeting Call to Order, Roll Call, & Approval of Agenda

Patty Richards called the meeting to order at 12:06 and completed roll call.

- Patty Richards, Chair (Remote)
- Laura Sibilia (Joined at 12:14)
- Brian Otley (Remote)
- Holly Groschner (Remote)
- Dan Nelson (Absent)
- Christine Hallquist - Staff (Remote)
- Robert Fish – Staff (Remote)
- Alissa Matthews – Staff (Remote)
- Herryn Herzog – Staff (Remote)
- Lucy Rogers – Staff (Remote)
- Tracy Collier - Staff (Remote)
- Kristin Brynga – PSD Staff (Remote)

Patty Richards made a motion to approve the agenda as posted. The motion was seconded by Brian Otley. The agenda was unanimously approved.

II. Approval of February 13 and February 16 Meeting Minutes

The Board packet includes the minutes from previous meetings for 2/13 and 2/16. Patty Richards made a motion to approve the 2/13/2023 minutes, seconded by Brian Otley. The motion passed unanimously with three votes. Patty Richards made a motion to approve the 2/16/2023 minutes, seconded by Brian Otley. The motion passed unanimously with three votes.

III. Staff Updates

- *Christine Hallquist shared that WCVT is reducing their budget request by 1%. Christine is under the assumption that a reduction of 1% would not need approval. The board agreed that a vote was not necessary.*
- **General VCBB Updates- Rob Fish**
 - Working on letter of credit waiver - conditional waiver has been approved.*
 - General counsell hiring is delayed due to state system regarding.
 - Holly Groschner offered that the Board letter of support/need might help move this forward, and Rob Fish will reach out if this is warranted based on progress by end of day.**
 - Broadband Project Developer has been re-opened.*
 - Regulatory and Compliance position has interviews scheduled this week.*
 - NBRC grant changes were approved and are now in the state system for spending authority.*
 - FCC map challenge continues. 864 have been accepted, 15 overturned, and 20,974 are pending. Challenges are still being submitted to the fabric (location challenge).*
 - ZOOM will require us to have a meeting location and Christine Hallquist is working on setting this up for the next meeting.*

1. Holly Groschner requested an update on how VCBB staff are currently working remotely/telework. Christine Hallquist agreed to provide information in the weekly report to include the current state of teleworking.

- **CUD Progress Updates – Lucy Rogers**

- i. NWfiberx, Lamoille, and Otter Creek are still in process of requesting construction grants.
- ii. Meetings with CUD ED regarding financial needs to make sure they have the support needed.

- **Dashboard Review – Alissa Matthews**

- i. Alissa shared the dashboard with the new Board-approved amendments added.
- ii. Working with the Department of Education to update the school data. There are two schools in the state who report not having 100/100.

- **Communications & Media – Herryn Herzog**

- i. Herryn reminded the board that the press links are included in the weekly update and the website.

IV. VCUDA Updates

- Rob Vietzke gave an update on the three working groups:

- i. **Financial management and services workgroup** is working on construction of a shared CEO position. This work has begun with mapping of existing functionality available to the CUDs. The mapping will be used to determine priorities.
- ii. **Make-ready workgroup** is focused on coordination of access to rights-of-way and utility poles. There is a draft collaboration document that was shared with a utility company. They were receptive to streamlining the process.
- iii. **Legislative policy committee** received a presentation from DC on the federal BEAD funding and how that might impact the way VT is currently functioning.
 - 1. IJJA was given the charge of a granting agency and technical assistance role, and it is assumed this will benefit VT.
 - 2. Rob shared that they are focusing on two legislative priorities: CUD employees to have access to the retirement benefit and the letter of good standing from the Secretary of State.

V. Northwest Fiberworx Preconstruction Grant Amendment

- Sean Kio reported that they are requesting an amendment requesting the remainder of the pre-construction grant for operations for the next 18 months. A construction grant will follow. VCBB staff have reviewed and support the request. Holly Groschner requested that amendments be submitted in the context of the original request and inquired about the marketing plan due to the low line item and requested more information regarding the attorney line item. Sean shared that the budget work was updated based on the current expenses of the CUD. This funding is covering the next 18 months of operation. The marketing budget is on the low side and for paper outreach activities. The advocacy is done by staff and board members currently. It will be the responsibility of the ISP to market the services when the time comes. The local council has several decades of experience in telecom. They are used for MOU development and contract review and shared that they have council out of DC for other legal needs. Patty Richards asked when the construction grant would be submitted. Sean reported they hope to bring that this spring. Patty Richards moved to approve the pre-construction amendment of the \$1,371,663.75. Holly Groschner seconded, and the motion was approved unanimously.

VI. BEAD and Digital Equity Deep Dive

- Lucy Rogers provided a presentation on the federal projects ([attached presentation](#)).

VII. Open Policy Discussion

- Christine requested that the Board provide policy items that they would like to discuss at a future meeting.
 - i. Laura Sibilila requested financial policy discussion.
 - ii. Holly Groschner requested grant monitoring policy discussion.
 - iii. Lucy Rogers shared that a CUD is looking for clarity for minimum contract requirements for the partner subcontracts (operating agreements).
 - 1. Holly Groschner asked for a diagram of what was required the last time this was discussed when the topic is addressed.

VIII. Public Comment

- Rob Vietzke provided positive feedback on the BEAD and Digital Equity presentation.

IX. Parking Lot – *Christine Hallquist*

Christine Hallquist reviewed the parking lot items noting establishing policy to address enforceability of the partners of the CUDs. This has now been added to the policy discussion for a future meeting. Budget updates have been added to the Board meeting agenda and will be on-going quarterly. Patty Richards suggested the VCBB use enforceability standards to monitor and enforce the grant requirements. Laura Sibilila requested a commitment to complete this work prior to new grants.

X. Confirm Next Regular Meeting 4/10 & Motion to Adjourn

Patty Richards made the motion to adjourn, and Laura Sibilila seconded. The motion was unanimously approved and meeting adjourned at 3:19.

Press inquiries; please contact Herryyn Herzog, herryyn.herzog@vermont.gov, (802) 522-3396