

Vermont Community Broadband Board
Unapproved Governing Board Meeting Minutes
September 02, 2021
Held in GIGA conference room
112 State Street, Montpelier, VT
Christine Hallquist
Executive Director
Phone – 802-636-7853
Email – christine.hallquist@vermont.gov

09:03 – meeting opened.

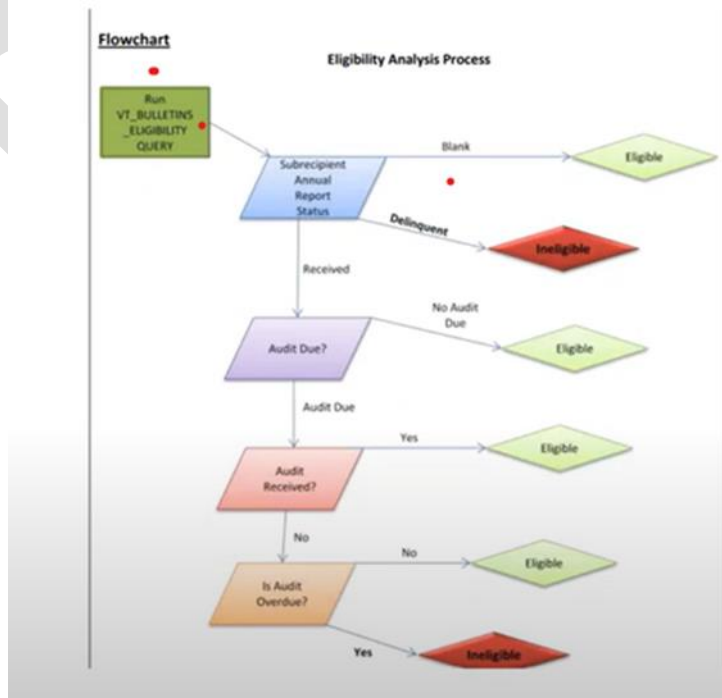
Roll call – Board members present; Patty Richards – chair, Dan Nelson, Holly Groschner, Laura Sibilis (virtual), Brian Otley

June Tierney Presentation

June presented the grant process that is currently in place and suggested that the Board look at this process. *June will share it with the Board.* A discussion ensued regarding the process relative to the maturity of the CUDs and their respective ability to comply with grant requirements. *Two suggestions for staff to provide CUD training arose from this discussion:*

- *Grant management training*
- *Organizational development training*

The annual reporting requirements of the grant process were presented. The Grant Manager will provide support for these reports. A flow chart showed how the grant recipients are categorized in terms of risk. The state views CUDs as a “moderate risk.” As a result of the risk assessment discussion, the Board recognizes that the CUDs are in various stages of maturity within the moderate risk designation and the VCBB will likely develop strategies based on the individual CD maturity.



1Grant Risk Flow-chart

Policy Statement: Identify the requirements for the CUDs based on risk levels.

The requirements for a single audit were discussed. The VCBB will develop a standard approach for the CUDs. A Model has been developed by the PSD that came from the Office of Finance and Management. *June will share it with the Board.*

Grant disbursement strategies were then discussed. As part of the grant disbursements that Board may want to review Partnership Agreements and ensure grant requirements are included in those Agreements.

Policy Statement: Establish criteria and grant requirements with the CUDs based on a Maturity Model.

As part of the Grant Management process the question of VCUDA involvement arose. *The Board requested that VCUDA be invited to a future meeting to discuss their aspirations.*

The Board requested staff include a graph that shows what grant responsibilities will be part of the PSD work versus the VCBB work. Include identification of who will take responsibility at each CUD.

The responsibilities of the Grant Administrator housed at the PSD were then discussed. June presented what those responsibilities were related to the VCBB grant process. A question was asked as to what the VCBB should be doing to keep things moving prior to the position being filled? June advised that the PSD and the VCBB will continue to work with the Office of Finance and Management.

Motion: Approve the Grant Administrator position housed at the PSD and funded by the VCBB. Dan Nelson made the motion. Brand Otley seconded. Motion passed.

One of the Board members wanted to know how this, and other hires relate to the original staff proposal? The answer was that this original staff proposal is now outdated. *The Board then requested that the staff present an updated definition of the organization with a description of what the role of each position is.*

The proposed role of the Administrative Assistant was discussed. Some criteria that the Board set included:

- Capacity to understand the moving nature of the VCBB
- Subject area expertise
- Being pro-active
- Takes initiative

Motion: Authorize staff to hire Administrative Assistant. Brian Otley moved. Dan Nelson seconded. Motion passed.

The proposal to hire a staff attorney was then discussed. Commissioner Tierney advises VCBB to hire General Counsel for everyday legal work and the Board hire attorney specialists on an as-needed basis. There are three categories of legal work:

1. Daily work, RFIs, RFPs, public document requests
2. Governance and Operational questions from the Board. Related – does the Board attorney need to be present at every meeting. No. Will have attorney review minutes and recording.
3. Sustainability of systems, commercial contract review, open access, revision to state in case of failure

The Board decided that 2 and 3 are part of the contracted attorney work. *If we move forward with a staff General Counsel, make sure there is adequate funds to access specialized attorneys as needed. Include Board skills with the General Counsel job criteria.*

VCUDA may want to hire a centralized resource for CUD legal needs. *Board requests staff to speak with the Vermont League of Cities and Towns for guidance.*

Motion: Authorize staff to hire General Counsel. Holly Groschner moved. Dan Nelson seconded. Motion passed.

Proposal to modify agenda to add placeholder for executive session and move Ratification of Policy positions, Affordability discussion, website and over-arching standards to next meeting. Add GIS budget item to this meeting. Proposal passed without dissent.

Motion: Authorize staff to spend up to \$150K (current budget year) to obtain (deliver) GIS services to the Board. Holly Groschner moved. Patty Richards seconded. Motion passed.

Public Input

Christa Shute – NEK Broadband

- CUDs want opportunity to comment on policies.
- Some CUDs have made significant progress toward getting construction started in the spring.
- Can we make initial commitments on grant disbursements to keep things moving?

Chris Recchia – ValleyNet and EC Fiber

- There is a six-month material lead-time. You (We) need to order by end of the year.
- Plan on applying for construction funds for their new towns.
- Want to have discussions regarding construction funds prior to next year.

12:03 Motion to adjourn. Dan Nelson moved. Brian Otley seconded. Motion passed.

Post meeting request to have State Auditor at future meeting.