

Vermont Community Broadband Board Meeting Monday, November 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 12:07 and completed roll call.

- Patty Richards, Chair (Remote)
- Laura Sibilila (Remote)
- Holly Groschner (Remote)
- Dan Nelson (Remote)
- Brian Otley (Not present)
- Christine Hallquist - Staff (Remote)
- Robert Fish – Staff (Remote)
- Toni Clithero – Staff (Remote)
- Steven Zubkoff – Staff (Remote)
- Herryn Herzog – Staff (Remote)
- Lucy Rogers – Staff (Remote)
- Chance Payette – Staff (Remote)
- Alexei Monsarrat– Staff (Remote)
- Kristen Brynga– Staff (Remote)
- Alissa Mathews– Staff (Remote)

Patty Richards made a motion to approve the agenda, seconded by Holly. *The Parking lot should be included in every meeting. Restoration of \$20M funding. Letters for Legislative committees. Otter Creek update. No further discussion. Rule 3.700, Pole Attachment, should be added to the next meeting for discussion. Unanimously approved by Patty, Laura, Holly, and Dan.*

II. Approval of Minutes (August 14 and September 11 Meeting)

Patty made the motion to approve the minutes for the August 14th meeting, seconded by Laura. The Board asked that lines be stricken in the sections marked as Roman Numerals 3 and 6. No further discussion. *Voted in favor of the motion to approve the minutes with the two changes by Patty, Laura, Dan, and Holly.*

Patty made the motion to approve the minutes for the September 11th meeting, seconded by Dan. The Board discussed the level of detail and Patty asked Christine to go over the meeting minutes and bring them back for the next meeting. No further action was taken by the Board. *The Board added Board Policy being published to the website to the Parking Lot as a new item, including the approved Ex Parte Policy.*

III. Public Comment

Irv Thomae commented on the adoption of Board policies regarding the distinction between BEAD funded work and overall Board policy.

Rob Vietzke commented on the process for Board policy adoption and the CUDs' opportunity to review prior to their finalization. Rob also mentioned he hoped the Board would consider the comments made to BEAD Volume 2.

IV. Policy Subgroups and Transfer policy drafting to staff

A draft process proposal for Policy approval, submitted by VCUDA, was discussed. This proposal will continue to be reviewed and added to the next meeting agenda. The proposal will be shared with the Board after Patty and Rob finish the draft. The Board discussed the status of their draft policies for each of the subgroups. A timeline target was suggested for a month from now. The Sunset Provision subgroup is on a different timeline as previously discussed. No further discussion. *No action was taken by the Board.*

V. Personnel Matter - Executive Session

Patty explained the general concept of the item up for discussion and *Laura made the motion to enter Executive Session, seconded by Holly. Christine requested to include herself, Toni, and Rob from staff. Motion passed unanimously by Patty, Holly, Laura, and Dan.*

The Board entered Executive Session at 1:00.

The Board returned from Executive Session at 1:46.

Patty made a motion that the Board authorize staff to put an RFP out for government affairs services with the timeline to bring someone on by January 1st and also instructed staff to do research on how we can fund this RFP effort, seconded by Holly. No further discussion. Unanimously approved by Patty, Laura, Holly, and Dan.

VI. Legislative Priorities

This discussion item was moved to the next meeting. No action was taken by the Board.

VII. ARPA Local Fiscal Recovery Town Match

This discussion item was moved to the next meeting. No action was taken by the Board.

VIII. NTIA Plans – Digital Equity & BEAD updates and discussion

Staff presented a timeline for BEAD and Digital Equity for submission to the NTIA, highlighting a couple of the items. The 5-year action plan was submitted and has been generally accepted. The BEAD initial proposal Volume I was submitted, and we have received and submitted additional comments and edits. For Volume II, we are hoping to receive final comments today to send out the Final Draft for the Special meeting on November 21. Once the NTIA has accepted Volume 1 and Volume 2 has been submitted, the Challenge Process can begin. For Digital Equity, the plan needs to be submitted in February to the NTIA. The first Draft Digital Equity Plan will be reviewed at the November 21 Special meeting. The Public Comment period will begin on December 1. The December and January meetings will be additional reviews for comment for the plan to be approved by the Board in February.

For the BEAD Initial Proposal Volume II, there were a lot of relevant comments received from the public comment period around scoring and sub-grantee selection. Staff discussed three main subjects, including Sub-grantee Selection, Low-cost affordability, and accountability provisions. Regarding affordability, a straw poll of all those in favor of keeping the affordability \$45 and not to exceed \$75 was conducted and all Board members agreed. Feedback from the Board to be included in the next draft are:

- Grammar and proofreading final pass.
- The number and frequency of acronyms hinders readability.
- Broadband for telehealth for older Vermonters could be emphasized more centrally.
- Scoring should clearly outline that Minimal BEAD Outlay is scored based on the total amount of BEAD funding requested, not the total amount of match included. This is in addition to the considerations of reliability and resiliency.
- Consider receiving bids for only unserved addresses, not both unserved and underserved.
- Include future VCBB Board policies which may pertain to BEAD subgrantees.
- Provide parameters for “lifetime of assets.”

No further discussion. No action taken by the Board.

IX. VCUDA Updates

Rob Vietzke spoke to VCUDA updates regarding affordable broadband, their support of the Northern Border Grant, and an event he attended for DVFiber's initial customer launch. No further discussion. No action taken by the Board.

X. Public Comment

Christa Shute wanted to applaud the work done by Staff. She also mentioned that NEK Broadband supports the VCBB's proposed affordability plan, which includes a range of \$45 to \$75. She also asked if there was any guidance about Starlink versus fixed wireless and what evidence is needed to demonstrate that an off-grid location is not a serviceable location.

XI. Confirm Special Meeting 11/21 & Motion to Adjourn

The next scheduled VCBB Board meeting is Tuesday, November 21st from 8:00 am to 12:00 pm. Items that were not discussed and the added agenda items will be moved to the 21st meeting. Patty made a motion to adjourn at 3:59, seconded by Laura. Motion was approved unanimously by Patty, Holly, Laura, and Dan.