

Vermont Community Broadband Board Draft Meeting Minutes
Meetings are being held virtually.
December 12, 2022

I. Call To Order – 12:03pm

Roll call completed by Patty Richards

Patty Richards, Chair (Remote)
Laura Sibia (Remote)
Brian Otley (Remote)
Holly Groschner (Absent)
Dan Nelson (Remote)
Christine Hallquist - Staff (Remote)
Robert Fish – Staff (Absent)
Alissa Matthews – Staff (Remote)
Stan Macel – Staff (Remote)
Herryn Herzog – Staff (Remote)
Lucy Rogers – Staff (Remote)
Tracy Collier - Staff (Remote)
Kristin Brynga – PSD Staff (Remote)
Adam Bornstein – Staff (Remote)

Patty Richards made a motion to approve the agenda with suggested change of moving IV to between item IX and X, seconded by Dan Nelson, and the agenda was unanimously approved.

II. Approval of the November 28th Draft Minutes

The Board discussed the November 28, 2022, draft Board Meeting minutes. Patty Richards made a motion to approve the minutes, seconded by Laura Sibia and the motion was unanimously approved.

III. VCBB Pre-purchase of Materials Policy Update

Christine Hallquist shared that in order to avoid the supply chain delays, the CUDs have requested to have the ability to pre-order materials for the next phase of the construction using the approved allocation with prior VCBB staff approval. The pre-purchases will be shared in the weekly report. It was determined through discussion that this authority has been granted by the board previously and the practice is allowable. A request was made to add pre-construction grant information to dashboard. Alissa shared this is planned to be available to the board in January.

IV. NBRC Shared Services Capacity Grant

Lucy Rogers, Rob Vietzke, and Ellie de Villiers shared the proposal, highlighting the grant funding opportunity:

Rob Vietzke and Lucy Rogers shared that there are funds available through an existing grant agreement (1.25 million current competitive grant and 1.25 million additional allocation) to be used over 2022 and 2023. The VCBB staff seek board approval to move from a competitive grant to a directed grant. These funds would be used to support capacity through positions (Expand Coordination including, CFO, Communications, and Make-Ready Support) at VCBB and

VCUDA. This would allow CUDs to have shared resources allowing for efficiency and keep funds available for infrastructure. Funding would be limited to the two-year period, and it would be the responsibility of VCUDA to fund the positions after that.

- Laura Sibiliala questioned why that position would be housed at VCUDA as opposed to VCBB. Rob Vietzke shared that VCUDA needs this role to maintain internal controls for audits and grant compliance. Christine Hallquist reiterated that the positions could be shared by the CUDs and not duplicated. Laura Sibiliala agreed that the capacity is needed but remains concerned that VCBB will become overly focused on regulatory matters.
- Christine Hallquist reminded the board of the complexities of the funding requirements.
- Laura Sibiliala commented that VCBB was intended to be more development than regulatory.
- Brian Otley questioned the ability to streamline the process for determining how to align and assign new positions to VCBB and/or VCUDA and wonders if it would be possible to map this out in advance.
- Patty Richards reminded the board that when the funding is exhausted the CUDs will need to absorb the costs of positions.

Patty Richards made the motion to approve the VCBB staff request to pursue 2.5 million from the NBRC for the general support outlined in the board packet. Dan Nelson Seconded and the board unanimously approved.

V. FCC Broadband Map Challenge Strategy

Herryn Herzog presented the strategy for the FCC broadband map challenge included in the board packet.

- Christine Hallquist shared that speed tests are not required for challenges.
- Patty Richards was appreciative of the outreach methodology using multiple modalities.
- Laura Sibiliala asked the how the CUDs are involved. Christine Hallquist shared that VCBB is taking the lead and aggregating the information.
- Patty Richards encouraged everyone to check their address and submit a challenge if warranted.

VI. Mission of the VCBB Policy Discussion

Patty Richards shared the proposed mission/purpose statement below.

It is the purpose of the VCBB and Vermont Community Broadband Fund to support policies and programs designed to accelerate community efforts that advance the State's goal of achieving universal access to reliable, high-quality, affordable, and fixed broadband. The VCBB was created to coordinate, facilitate, support, and accelerate the development and implementation of universal community broadband solutions.

Patty moved that the board adopt the mission/purpose statement as shown above. **No second was heard;** however, the board approved unanimously.

- Rob Vietzke shared the CUDs were ok with not including the language “for eligible entities.”

- Laura Sibilila pointed out that the mission/purpose statement works, and the law can be referenced when questions arise.
- It was agreed that universal service is part of the VCBB role by supporting and accelerating the community broadband buildouts.

VII. VCBB Data and Overbuild Policy

A redline copy of the Data and Overbuild Policy was circulated to the Board with changes to the wording on the first page of the policy to include “through acceleration of community broadband solutions” language. Notable policy updates are the removal of the 20% threshold and alignment with the NTIA requirements for overbuild. Holly Groschner was also consulted prior to the meeting and is comfortable with the policy being put to a vote as she is with the option to amend in the future.

- Patty Richards moved to approve the draft version of the VCBB Data and Overbuild Policy dated 12-12-2022 with redlines to include reference to community broadband on the first page with the option to revisit the policy. Laura Sibilila seconded, and the motion carried unanimously.

Christine Hallquist also shared the challenges of the current process for drafting policies. She indicated that she will work directly with the Board and Stan Macel to draft all future policies in an effort to minimize the back and forth experienced in past efforts that have created policy delays.

VIII. Staff Updates

- General Updates
 - Please see the weekly reports for the general updates.
 - Digital equity plan is in process including building an advisory team. This will be required to receive the BEAD infrastructure grant.
 - Laura Sibilila asked how the CUDs will be included and Christine assured the board that CUDs will be part of the team.
- Dashboard Review
 - Alissa Matthews shared the VCBB Hub webpage where the dashboards, map apps, data layers, and training materials for the CUDs are posted publicly. The Hub webpage address was emailed to the Board: <https://explore-vcbb.hub.arcgis.com/>
- Press Coverage
 - Heryn Herzog presented a summary of media coverage since the last board meeting that can be found in the board packet.
 - Call to Vermonters generated some press including Consumer Reports, VTDigger, WCAX, VT Business Magazine, and Bennington Banner.
- Upcoming Construction Grant Applications
 - Lucy Rogers gave an update on construction grants.

- Lamoille Fiber Net has a construction grant submission in process and is looking forward to getting guidance on how to use map data.
 - VCBB has been meeting with Otter Creek CUD and is a few months out from submitting a pre-application.
 - VCBB has a meeting scheduled with Northwest this week.
- Grant Agreement Status and Monitoring Activities
 - Kristin Brynga shared that the Southern VT grant agreement should go out for signatures by early next week.
 - Monthly program reports have been submitted and reviewed without any immediate concerns.
 - Uniform Guidance training went well and more trainings are planned for after the new year.

IX. VCUDA Update

Rob Vietzke provided an update for VCUDA:

- Legislative items have been drafted for this session. Everyone agreed that VCBB and VCUDA should be aligned.
 - Seeking the opportunity for CUDs to obtain certificate of good standing from the Secretary of State to allow CUDs to apply for additional funding.
 - Merger policies to allow CUDs to combine.
 - To allow municipal employees to have access to the municipal retirement system.
- Shared Data Policy work has been a collaborative process with VCBB, and they feel good about where the policy is now.
- Accurate FCC mapping is very important to CUDs for address and fiber discrepancies.
 - **Timeline** is a concern for successful challenges.
- Make-ready staff is an important strategy to reduce unequal practice among pole owners and make sure that efficiencies are identified as we learn more about this.

X. Public Comment

There were public comments provided by:

- Leslie Caldwell – Mansfield Community Fiber and Stowe Cable Systems
 - Overbuild and Data Policy – Their service area has access to 25/3 including the towns Underhill, Cambridge, Fletcher, Fairfax and Waterville. It is important that policy focuses on underserved communities to limit overbuild in areas that are already served using accurate and up-to-date map data.

XI. Parking Lot

Christine Hallquist reviewed the items in the parking lot, which include:

- VCBB's approach to mapping and strategy for challenging the FCC - presented the challenge process background information Nov. 28th and will finalize strategy for December meeting. - ***Closed and will keep the board updated in future board meetings.***
- Invite the Federal Delegation to future Board Meeting. There is a tentative plan to have them attend January meeting.
- Workshop for the CUDs on Uniform Guidance is scheduled for December 7th. ***Completed.***
- Subsequent overbuild policy discussed Nov. 14th, continued discussion December 12th. ***Approved 12/12/2022.***
- Data policy presented Nov. 28th, will be revisited December 12th. ***Approved 12/12/2022.***
- Development of a mission statement. Patty will lead this task, and it will be presented at a future meeting. - Approved 12/12/22. - ***Completed/Approved 12/12/2022.***

XII. Confirm Date and Proposed Agenda for Next Regular Meeting & Motion to Adjourn

Patty Richards confirmed the next meeting will be January 9th noon-4:00pm. Patty made a motion to adjourn. Dan Nelson seconded, the motion was unanimously approved, and the meeting was adjourned at 1:48 pm.