



Board Packet Executive Summary

March 13, 2023

Christine Hallquist, Executive Director

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### **NW Fiberworx Pre-Construction Amendment**

VCBB staff met with Northwest Fiberworx to review the request for the VCBB to provide the CUD with their share of remaining pre-construction funds. These funds will provide NW Fiberworx with the resources they need in order to get to construction. As part of their due diligence, the CUD has experienced delays in getting to construction that will be explained to the Board at the meeting as part of the request. The staff recommends the Board approve the pre-construction grant request of \$1,371,663.75.

### **Staff presentation on the IIJA BEAD and Digital Equity program**

The VCBB is in the process of building the 5-year plan and an Initial Proposal for pulling down the funds from the IIJA program. Staff has been working closely with the NTIA to overcome some of the challenges that the program has in place for models that focus on public ownership, accountability, and oversight. It is essential that the Board fully understands the program and the requirements and how this program interacts with ACT 71. The VCBB has approximately nine months to submit plans. These plans are a pre-requisite for the funding. We are planning to commit the bulk of this Board meeting to providing the information and address concerns from the Board as we embark on the planning process. Staff will provide ongoing updates with the Weekly Updates as well as Board meetings on the progress of the planning effort. The Board will be given an opportunity to review the plans prior to final submission. Included in this packet will be materials explaining the program. Staff will present a summary of the program to the Board at the meeting.

**The Board is urged to review the following extensive set of background materials before the meeting**

#### **Broadband Equity Access Deployment (BEAD)**

[BEAD NOFO](#)\*\*

[BEAD Frequently Asked Questions](#)\*\*

[Pew: BEAD What States Need to Know](#)

[BEAD Program Description – Annotated Guide \(Broadband Money\)](#)

[BEAD NOFO Deep Dive](#)

[BEAD Subgrantee Selection Primer](#)\*\*

[BEAD NOFO – Financial Issues](#)\*\*  
[Five-Year Action Plan Guidance](#)

**[Digital Equity Act \(DEA\)](#)**

[Digital Equity Planning Grant Program Notice of Funding Opportunity](#)\*\*

[Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQs\) for Digital Equity Act Programs](#)\*\*

[BEAD-DE Alignment Guide](#) \*\*

[Digital Equity Guide for States](#)

[Digital Equity Act – Request for Comments](#)

**Vermont Community Broadband Board Meeting**  
**Monday, March 13, 2023, 12:00pm – 4:00pm**  
**AGENDA**

Meeting is being held virtually.

[Click here to join the meeting](#)

Join by Phone; [+1 802-828-7667,494812198#](#)

*Note: there may be executive sessions as needed*

- 12:00 1) Meeting Call to Order, Roll Call, & Approval of Agenda
- 12:05 2) Approval of February 13 and February 16 (special meeting) Meeting Minutes
- 12:15 3) Staff Updates
- General VCBB Updates – *Rob Fish*
  - CUD Progress Updates – *Lucy Rogers*
  - Dashboard Review – *Alissa Matthews*
  - Communications & Media – *Herryn Herzog*
- 12:40 4) VCUDA Updates
- 1:10 5) Northwest Fiberworx PreConstruction Grant Amendment
- 1:30 6) BEAD and Digital Equity Deep Dive
- 3:15 7) Open Policy Discussion
- 3:30 8) Public Comment
- 3:45 9) Parking Lot – *Christine Hallquist*
- 3:55 10) Confirm Next Regular Meeting 4/10 & Motion to Adjourn

Press inquiries; please contact Herryn Herzog, [herryn.herzog@vermont.gov](mailto:herryn.herzog@vermont.gov), (802) 522-3396.

# Vermont Community Broadband Board Draft Meeting Minutes

Meetings are being held virtually.

February 16, 2023  
Special Meeting

## I. Call To Order – 12:37pm

Roll call completed by Patty Richards

Patty Richards, Chair (Remote)  
Laura Sibilia (Remote)  
Brian Otley (Remote)  
Holly Groschner (Remote)  
Dan Nelson (Not Able to Attend)  
Christine Hallquist - Staff (Remote)  
Robert Fish – Staff (Remote)  
Alissa Matthews – Staff (Remote)

Patty Richards made a motion to approve the agenda as provided. Holly Groschner seconded the motion, and it was approved unanimously.

## II. Election of VCBB Vice Chair

Patty Richards made a motion to re-elect Dan Nelson. The motion was seconded by Holly Groschner and was approved unanimously.

*"At its initial organizational meeting, and annually thereafter at the first meeting following February 1, the Board shall elect from among its members a vice chair."*

## III. Confidential General Counsel Board Interview - Executive Session

Patty Richards made a motion to go into Executive Session. It was seconded by Holly Groschner and approved unanimously. The Board went into Executive Session with Christine Hallquist and Rob Fish.

*"the appointment or employment or evaluation of a public officer or employee, provided that the public body shall make a final decision to hire or appoint a public officer or employee in an open meeting and shall explain the reasons for its final decision during the open meeting" 1 V.S.A. § 313(a)(3)*

iv. Parking Lot, Confirm Next Regular Meeting 3/13 & Motion to Adjourn

Press inquiries; please contact Herryn Herzog, [Herryn.herzog@vermont.gov](mailto:Herryn.herzog@vermont.gov), (802) 522-3396

DRAFT

# Vermont Community Broadband Board Meeting

## Monday, February 13<sup>th</sup>, 2023, 12:00pm – 3:30pm

### Minutes

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

Patty Richards called the meeting to order at 12:05 and completed roll call.

- Patty Richards, Chair (Remote)
- Laura Sibia Joined at 12:14 (Remote)
- Brian Otley (Remote)
- Holly Groschner (Remote)
- Dan Nelson – Joined at 12:30 (Remote)
- 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 with a suggested change of moving (VI) budget report to (III). to make sure all board members were present for (III General Counsel Interview). The motion was seconded by Holly Groschner. The updated agenda was unanimously approved.

#### II. Approval of January 9<sup>th</sup> Meeting Minutes

The Board discussed the January 9, 2023, draft Board Meeting minutes. Patty Richards made a motion to approve the minutes, seconded by Brian Otley. Holly Groschner shared that the wrong statute was quoted regarding the reason to enter executive session and recommended that they be updated to A3 to discuss personnel matters. The motion passed unanimously.

#### III. Confidential General Counsel Board Interview (Executive Session - 1 VSA section 313 A3 - discuss personnel matters)

Patty Richards made a motion to enter executive session for personnel matters including Christine Hallquist and Rob Fish. Holly seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously. The board returned from executive session at 1:17 pm. No action was taken.

#### IV. Chittenden County CUD Pre-Construction Application Presentation & Review

Patty Richards disclosed that she sits on the select board for Underhill, a town included in the proposal and will recuse herself from the vote. Erik Wells and Ann Janda presented a pre-construction proposal to include hiring an executive director and other pre-construction needs. The CUD currently includes eight member towns including Westford and Underhill. Laura Sibia called attention to ACT 71 and the requirement of a universal service plan and mentioned that it will be important to consider accountability when selecting internet service providers. Holly Groschner moved to approve the pre-construction grant request of \$300,000.00 for the Chittenden County CUD. Dan Nelson seconded. Patty Richards abstained from the vote. The motion was approved by four votes.

#### V. NBRC Capacity Grant – Next Steps - Rob Fish & Rob Vietzke

Rob Fish shared that the NBRC approved the amendments submitted by the VCBB team. Rob Vietzke shared that the priorities outlined in the amendments are VCUDA/CUD priorities. Holly Groschner asked for clarity regarding the current Public Outreach position (Herryn Herzog). Rob Fish and Christine Hallquist explained that the current position is temporary and limited in hours, pay, and scope. Holly Groschner suggested that hiring a firm to do this work might be more cost effective. Laura questioned where the technical assistance for CUDs will be located? Rob Fish shared that this work will be done both at VCBB and VCUDA. Rob Vietzke shared that this funding will allow the CUDs to align and produce a product that will align the CUDs and show universal growth. Laura asked about the remaining funds (\$820,000.00) and if the board will be kept informed. Christine assured the board that the team will come back to the board on this. Patty made the motion to use the \$2.5 million to support the work of the CUDs. It was seconded by Laura Sibilia. Holly Groschner opposed the motion. The motion was approved with a vote of four. \*For future votes the board requested that the staff provide the language.

**VI. VCBB Budget Report Format and Review – Tracy Collier**

Tracy Collier presented the draft budget report and requested feedback on the format. The Board suggested changes and acknowledged that the report would be iterative until it meets the needs of the Board. There was discussion around the current state and the need for supporting communications union districts with budgets monitoring and performance indicators.

**VII. VCUDA Update – Rob Vietzke**

Rob Vietzke reported that VCUDA has established working groups. The Make-Ready and Financial work group have met twice since the last board meeting. Process mapping is moving forward. The cost of pole and pole replacement is increasing as much as 30% over the last year. Poles that have been in service for 40 years or more are being discussed. Asking questions such as, is it possible to replace fewer poles? The financial working group is looking at inventory and coordination of the financial systems and compliance tools used. The BEAD program is being analyzed to build foundational knowledge and VCUDA will return to VCBB to align the efforts and budget. Legislative day on January 31, 2023, was successful, thanks to Laura Sibilia and team. Laura Sibilia questioned the 40-year poles and the discussions that are taking place with utilities and if there is engagement by the department. Rob Vietzke shared that this is not in the works currently, but collaboration is expected. Holly Groschner asked if the protocol for replacement poles is being followed and is the grant covering some costs? Rob Vietzke assured the board that they are committed to getting this right as early in the process as possible.

**VIII. Staff Updates**

- General VCBB Updates – *Rob Fish*
  - Weekly reports have been provided to the Board.
  - Staff attended a meeting in DC regarding Broadband, Equity, Access, & Deployment (BEAD) and the Digital Equity (DE) planning Grant. They had the opportunity to meet with congressional staff.
- CUD Progress Updates – *Lucy Rogers*
  - Chittenden pre-construction grant was approved in this meeting.
  - Otter creek and Northwest have construction grants in process and hope to have them ready for the April board meeting.
  - Lamoille is working on a pre-construction grant.
- Dashboard Review – *Alissa Matthews*
  - The dashboard has been updated with the pre-construction grants awarded in January.
  - There is a new map on the dashboard illustrating the school district data.
  - The maps are available on the hub link shared previously with the board.
- Communications & Media – *Herryn Herzog*

- “VCBB in the News” has been added to the VCBB website.
- FCC maps and challenge deadline are the top news items.
- The Vermont CUD models also received some press.
- Briefings were presented to the legislative committees.

Holly Groschner requested that a BEAD report be included in staff updates. Christine Hallquist shared that the team is hoping to have a full presentation for the board next meeting. Laura Sibilica asked that VCUDA be included in this presentation.

**IX. Public Comment**

- No public comment.

**X. Parking Lot – Christine Hallquist**

Christine Hallquist reviewed the parking lot items noting that to establish policy to address enforceability of the partners of the CUDs is an on-going effort. Budget updates have been added to the board meeting agenda and will be on-going. Two items were added to the parking lot, including an update on Southern Vermont construction plans regarding Bennington County and BEAD/DE presentation for the next Board meeting.

Affordability will be added to the next Board meeting as a discussion.

**XI. Confirm Next Regular Meeting 3/13 & Motion to Adjourn**

There was discussion about availability to attend the next Board meeting. All agreed the 3/13 meeting will work. Patty made the motion to adjourn, and the motion was approved. 2:20 meeting adjourned.

Press inquiries; please contact Christine Hallquist, [christine.hallquist@vermont.gov](mailto:christine.hallquist@vermont.gov), 802-636-7853





# NORTHWEST FIBERWORX

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Vermont Community Broadband Board  
112 State Street  
Montpelier, VT 05620-2601

Dear Vermont Community Broadband Board,

On behalf of the Northwest Vermont Communications Union District, I would like to present a proposed addition to the awarded Broadband Preconstruction Grant. As we near the budget end date submitted in our first request in the fall of 2021, we must continue receiving operational support for our pre-construction activities and funding for staff. We have made great strides over the last year and are seeking to apply for the Act 71 Broadband Construction Grant this spring, with construction set to begin this summer. Following our first full year of operations, we now have an enhanced understanding of our budget requirements; the proposed addition will fund organizational needs for 18 months.

This request includes the following:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Staff Salary &amp; Benefits</li><li>• Operational Expenses</li><li>• Technology</li><li>• Project Management &amp; Design</li><li>• VETRO Fibermap</li><li>• Legal Services</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Audit</li><li>• Make Ready &amp; Pole Application</li><li>• Accounting/Payroll Services</li><li>• Association Fees/Membership</li><li>• Events/Conferences</li><li>• Contingency</li></ul>
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**Remaining Pre-C NWCUD Allocation: \$1,371,663.75**

**Total request: \$1,371,663.75**

I appreciate your consideration of this proposal.

Sincerely,

Sean R. Kio

Executive Director  
Northwest Vermont Communications Union District



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Task	2023 Request
Staff Salary & Benefits	\$ 592,167.00
Operational Expenses	\$ 119,758.50
Technology	\$ 7,500.00
Project Management & Design	\$ 305,000.00
VETRO Fibermap	\$ 37,500.00
Legal Services	\$ 60,000.00
Audit	\$ 15,000.00
Make Ready & Pole Application	\$ 173,625.00
Accounting/Payroll Services	\$ 15,000.00
Association Fees/Membership	\$ 15,000.00
Events/Conferences	\$ 7,500.00
Contingency	\$ 23,613.25
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 1,371,663.75</b>

**Budget Notes:**

2021-2022 Budget was scheduled for 15 months.

2023-2024 Budget scheduled for 18 months.

Category changes to better align with 2023 NW Annual Budget

## Additional Requests

- Staff Salary & Benefits
  - Current staff Executive Director (FT), Operations Manager (FT), Admin (PT)
  - Benefits – Medical, Dental, retirement, worker’s compensation, short-term and long-term disability.
- Operational Expenses
  - Necessary organizational expenses including: business development services, insurance, software services, utilities, financial, and other general expenses.
- Technology
  - Hardware replacement (if necessary)
- Project Management & Design
  - Contracted with NRTC
- VETRO Fibermap
  - Fiber management platform and mapping data aggregation
- Legal Services
  - Retained with Bauer Gravel Farnham and Lerman Setner
- Audit
  - Completed 2020 & 2021. To begin 2023 in May.



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- Make Ready & Pole Application
  - Contracted with Mission Broadband
- Accounting/Payroll Services
  - Contracted with Brad Lewis for monthly services.
- Association Fees/Membership
  - VCUDA & Fiber Broadband Association
- Events/Conferences
  - Training and broadband conferences
- Contingency
  - < 2% of budget