



## Telecommunications & Connectivity Advisory Board

Meeting Minutes

June 17th, 2021 Meeting

10:00am – 11:30 am Remote Meeting

### Attendees:

1. David Snedeker – Chair of the Board, Northeastern Vermont Development Association
2. Michael Clasen – Deputy State Treasurer
3. Clay Purvis – Director, Connectivity Division, Dept. of Public Service
4. Michael DeHart - Telecommunications & Connectivity Staff, Dept. of Public Service
5. Evan Carlson – NEK CUD
6. Costa Pappis - AOT
7. Kenneth Jones – ACCD
8. Rob Fish – Rural Technical Assistance Specialist
9. June Tierney – Commissioner of PSD

### Members of public:

Steven Whitaker – Member of the Public  
 Jonathan Baker – NEK CUD  
 Gordon Mathews – VTel Wireless  
 Cecile Betit – Member of the Public

Item	Item Description	Action By
1.0	Called to Order 10:15 am	
2.0	Meeting Minutes Approval 5/26/21	Moved: Clasen Second: Carlson Approved
3.0	<p><b><u>Additions to Agenda:</u></b>  <u>3c- 10-Yr Telecom Plan</u>  <u>3d- Other business</u></p> <p><b><u>3a. TCAB Recommendations to the Vermont Community Broadband Board</u></b>            Snedeker- I remember a recommendation for VCBB members to join the TCAB. Any other recommendations?             Carlson- None from me. I've heard some potential names from VCUDA.</p>	

Snedeker- Do we know anyone who will be on the board?  
Purvis- No, we don't.

Snedeker- Is there a timeline?

Tierney- Some time before August 9

**3b. TCAB Board Vacancies**

Snedeker- I know we spoke about someone from Southern Vermont.  
Perhaps someone Laura Sabilia may know.

Carlson- has a list of names.

Zach Tomanelli- VPIRG

Lauren-Glenn Davitian – CCTV

Chris Adams – Southwestern Council on Aging- Rutland

Snedeker- Any thoughts on forwarding those names to the Governor's office?

Jones- want to fill the vacancies, but I want to do a more thorough review before we send it along as a recommendation from the TCAB.

Carlson- I'd be comfortable making a recommendation on Zach, but I'm less familiar with the others.

Pappis- Is that a duty of this board? To nominate board members when we have vacancies?

Snedeker- We're responsible for making sure that we're populated.

Clasen- My minimum before recommending anyone would be a letter of interest describing their background and what they can bring to the table.

Purvis- I think there are also probably some town-level people who have been active in this arena. Ken Milliman, among others. We can come up with some additions to the list.

Snedeker- And perhaps we can get a letter of interest from any candidate we consider.

Whitaker- You should include some background on this board's statutory obligations, achievements- would be useful in soliciting membership.

**3c. 10-Yr Telecom Plan**

Snedeker- So we have a markup version, does anyone have comments on that?

Carlson- Want to check in on the specifics around Land Mobile Radio. Technicians are foraging parts on Craigslist and EBay to keep networks running- is that true?

Purvis- I'm aware of anecdotes, but I don't know how common that really is. It's also a problem for Plain Old Telephone Service. POTS systems are like cars in Havana- they don't get new ones so they have to work with old parts.

Carlson- do you feel like the recommendations around that are sufficient?

Purvis- The Department stands by the plan.

Carlson- Interconnection between the CUD's and the 911 system. Who is developing this standard and the integration guidelines?

Purvis- I would expect 911 to take the lead on that.

Carlson- Change on page 60 re: host-remote isolation. I think it may need more context. It seems sufficient, but is the only mention of such a potential challenge. I know VOIP isn't regulated, what's the opportunity to add resilience there.

Purvis- I hear 2 issues. Host-remote isolation & Battery Backup. We did add a section to this in response to Jonathan Gibson's comments. Battery backup really comes down to consumer education and resilience in the grid. Certainly electric companies have been modernizing and moving lines from private easements to roadways. Outage reporting is also getting modernized.

Host-remote isolation is a different issue whose solution is route diversity. The telephone companies have reduced the problem, but certainly haven't eliminated it. The PUC is still looking at this issue.

Carlson- I like the inclusion of autonomous vehicle support. Who will be responsible for that?

Pappis- Complicating factor is that we don't really know what the future holds other than it will be data-intensive. This also applies to traffic signaling. When those vehicles move from just sensing one another to communicating amongst themselves, we don't know what will power that.

Purvis- Does that come from Federal Highway Administration or NTSA?

Pappis- They're putting a lot of energy into planning for that, but they still don't know which shape it will take. 10+ companies are operating

with experimental technologies at a small scale. The real issue is when these are mass-produced, what exactly will power those connections?

We know something from modern trains (positive train control)- Trains know where they are at all times to avoid collisions. That's done by linking land-based cellular networks and GPS satellite data. The data requirements will be substantially higher on the vehicle side.

Tierney- I think what you're asking is logical – who's going to be responsible. This document isn't designed to answer that question, but rather to articulate the issue, and the needs that should be addressed around it. Where is private industry, what kind of infrastructure will be deployed? I wouldn't be comfortable as the agency head in assigning those responsibilities. Even if I did, there's an election a year and a half from now. New leadership may see it differently. I appreciate the point, but the plan does what it should do- tees up this conversation.

Whitaker- Contrary to the Commissioner- 202d(9)(c):  
*In developing the Plan, the Department shall address each of the State telecommunications policies and goals of section 202c of this title, and shall assess initiatives designed to advance and make measurable progress with respect to each of those policies and goals. The assessment shall include identification of the resources required and potential sources of funding for Plan implementation.*

Carlson- Next Steps for feedback written up by Kenneth Jones after last meeting?

Jones- Request for crosswalk between recommendations, statute, and responsibilities. I think it's a good plan, but it's harder to tell how we make use of it. Once finalized, what then?

Carlson- Do we still want to try to put those recommendations into the executive summary?

Purvis- We reviewed the request and considered it. However, in our view, the plan is principally a policy document. As June alluded to- being prescriptive to the point of assigning what Agencies do at certain dates- could prevent state agencies from tackling these issues in a thoughtful way. "Who will do what, when?" is really a political question that future administrations will need to decide for themselves. This plan could suffer from being too prescriptive.

Carlson- I understand removing individual responsibilities. However, I'd like to see in the Exec Summary a breakdown of Statutes and their accompanying Recommendations, with citations to where that full recommendation is in the plan.

	<p>Purvis- Listing additional hearings on Final Draft of Telecom Plan remote + physical</p> <p><b><u>3d Other Business</u></b></p> <p>Carlson- I saw that Mary Evslyn was listed as the contact for Starlink in the plan... is that real?</p> <p>Purvis- I'll look into that, I'll ask our consultants if that was a mistake or intentional.</p> <p>Carlson- Questions about funding. H.315, \$20M in H.360, updates on those?</p> <p>Purvis- 315: Round 1 awards were issued and we're working on those grant agreements.</p> <p>Fish- Awardees are notified for R2. Full \$1.6M has been awarded for pre-construction and capacity building costs.</p> <p>Tierney- \$20M in H.360: Focus for now is getting the board staffed up. We're trying to get the entity stood up without the PSD having to exercise interim power on those funds. If that becomes necessary, it will be pursuant to statute. There's a lot in flux, though.</p> <p>Carlson- Anything new with treasury guidelines for funding? Should CUD's be aware of any changes in those rules?</p> <p>Tierney- The treasury did inadvertently misunderstand Vermont's governmental organization, where funds flowed to Counties. We're trying to surf that wave. The changeability is a little ridiculous, but we're actively monitoring it.</p> <p>Pappis- to Evan's q: There's been more discussions in Congress about the infrastructure stimulus bill. Are we expecting anything to materialize given how close the infrastructure bill seems to be?</p> <p>Tierney- We don't have any inside knowledge. I'm not personally as optimistic. I think DC will settle on a bucket for Broadband. I wouldn't be surprised if they say that ARPA funds were enough of a shot in the arm. I'm chasing down the delegation at every opportunity.</p>	
4	<p><b><u>Public Comment:</u></b></p> <p>Jonathan Baker- First want to ask about ongoing public hearings. I know there was limited participation in the earlier ones. My understanding is that these later ones are more communication-based rather than input-</p>	

based, right? These new comments won't make it into the plan at this point?

Purvis- We're still encouraging, accepting, considering, and may incorporate public comments. We encourage you and your constituents to provide any changes you would like to see. We're not required to respond to them at this point, but we will certainly review them. Just because the public comments draft is done, that doesn't mean we're done looking at comments.

Baker- I know these vacancies have been on the board for a long time, is there a reason why?

Tierney- It's been difficult to stem the turnover on this board, historically. It's not a duty for the board to populate itself, but I'm glad the board has taken that role.

Baker- Has the state changed its stance on Net Neutrality?

Tierney- We're willing to accept any comments on that.

Betit - Concerned about process. The website is difficult to navigate. Some hearings were missing from the website. This affects every aspect of our lives.

Whitaker – The role of this board is to advise the Commissioner on the telecom plan. The delays in engagements has totally defeated the ability of this board to fulfill its statutory mission.

The plan is deficient, and does not meet statutory requirements in approx. 90% of circumstances I've reviewed.

Adherence to the law is missing, this plan should not be adopted. To say it will have greater value for being more vague is telling. It should be a steady rudder across administrations. We paused fiber building on the interstate years ago, there's no explanation of that in this plan.

Fmr Chair of Central VT public Safety where PSD said public safety dispatch and microwave are not something they should plan for. This plan should include all systems of the state. All of that is missing in this plan. We're wrestling with spending multiple millions without a failover to the State microwave. The best part of this useless plan is Appendix G. The trivialization and dismissal of the comments. This Department has proven itself incapable of completing a plan. Vote to recommend this plan not be adopted and send it to the media and the Governor.

That is not the way to effectively spend \$200M. I've documented the statutory failures.

	Shelve this plan and start over with a new contractor and new management.	
5	<b>Next Meeting: TBD</b>  Adjournment 11:21 am	Motion: Jones  Second: Carlson

\*\*\*Minutes Subject to Approval\*\*\*

DRAFT