



Telecommunications & Connectivity Advisory Board
Meeting Minutes
May 26th, 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. Corey Chase - Telecommunications & Connectivity Staff, Dept. of Public Service

Members of public:

Steven Whitaker – Member of the Public
Jonathan Gibson – Member of the Public

Item	Item Description	Action By
1.0	Called to Order 10:04 am	
2.0	Meeting Minutes Approval 4/5/21	Moved: Jones Approved
3.0	<p><u>3a. Public Comment Draft of 10-Year Telecom Plan</u></p> <p>Carlson- Would like to see a comprehensive summary of goals, action items, timelines, and responsibilities of entities.</p> <p><i>Motion (Jones): Move that this board send a recommendation to the contractors to structure the plan's recommendations on statutory goals and identify entities that should move each recommendation forward.</i></p> <p><i>Second – Pappis</i></p> <p><i>Motion carries- Jones will draft the recommendation to the consultant</i></p>	

Jones- Public engagement... is there something in particular we want from the public?

Purvis- We're extending the public comment period and holding two additional hearings.

Pappis- As we move forward with implementation through the CUD's, I assume there will be some sort of marketing. Is that a safe assumption? Informing citizens goes beyond just a plan, it's a continuous endeavor of education and marketing.

Carlson- NEK BB has been trying to do that with quarterly updates and ongoing communication. I think all CUD's should be following a similar path in that regard, but I think that's probably VCUDA's role to help dictate that.

Jones- Route specificity... we want to tell customers that we're coming, but we are concerned that it's sensitive information given that we're overbuilding Consolidated in lots of places.

Pappis- My comment was also related to the role residents plan in CUD planning.

Whitaker- Engaging the public in a telecom plan needs to be broad. CUD's only focus on broadband, but the telecom plan is about much more than that. Divulging routes shouldn't be considered sensitive, state goals for open access and competitive choice.

3b. Role of TCAB going forward

Carlson- The role of the board is getting stripped down quite a bit. Remaining roles include advisement to Commissioner on Telecom Policy/Planning.

Jones- So what do you think happens between now and Jan 1 2022? Do CUD's need to have their proposals based on a universal service plan? Does this board have a role in determining their eligibility based on their USP's?

Purvis- For the remainder of the year, nothing changes for this board.

Carlson- Will the Department be issuing more funds through the Connectivity Initiative?

Tierney- That's not planned. This board is still welcome to advise and provide feedback, but we're still determining what that looks like. We should keep having these interactions.

Whitaker- Suggest you ask the Commissioner to ask Governor to fill missing seats. Connectivity Fund/Initiative is such a small piece of the funding picture- this board is going to have to assert itself in asking for changes in legislation if it wants a role in that.

Carlson- Would be worthwhile to fill those empty seats (I think there are 3).

3c. Passage of H.360

Purvis- Passed last week, not yet signed into law by Governor Scott.

Provided overview of H.360

-Vermont Community Broadband Board & Vermont Community BB Fund

Jones- Do you think the intent is that the current USF funds will no longer go into this pot?

Purvis- Sec. 7b – Those funds (additional .4% USF charge) will go to VCBB Fund rather than Connectivity Fund.

Jones- Is Universal Service Plan development something that this board should pick up since it needs to be moved on so quickly?

Tierney- The new board needs to be stood up in the next 60 days, and this is one of their responsibilities.

Carlson- Universal Service Plans / Business Plans- those might be two totally different things. The original Broadband Innovation Grant sought profitability within 3 years, which is merely a small slice of an overall USP.

Tierney- The new board's attorney will need to look at that. There's statutory language that the Board will have to resolve at its discretion. This board needs to consider whether it should provide comment to that board.

Carlson- Commissioner Tierney, do you think it's a good idea for this body to provide a formal recommendation to that new board?

Tierney- The more feedback that awaits them, the better. I'm sure they would welcome it.

Pappis- I think we all need to take time to absorb the bill and figure out what our recommendations are going to be. There needs to be careful thought and specificity. Notwithstanding legal interpretations, from our perspective we need to make our policy priorities clear. I suggest we

	<p>take the next few weeks to ourselves and come up with some ideas to bring back.</p> <p>Agenda item for next meeting: TCAB recommendations to VCBB Board</p> <p>Pappis- Questions like weighing the importance of immediate deployment options (other than fixed bb) vs fixed bb solutions.</p> <p>Snedeker- I think we need to set a timeline for this. Two weeks I think would be sufficient.</p> <p>Pappis- I think we need to wait until the next meeting and make sure we aren't emailing ideas back and forth outside of meetings.</p> <p>Jones- Suggestion: Filling membership... should we try to see if VCBB board nominees want to sit on this body to get up to speed?</p> <p>Tierney- Overlapping membership? I think this board could certainly make recommendations to the Governor.</p> <p>Carlson- It's important for us to consider what voices might be missing from the TCAB.</p> <p>Jones- Low income, underserved... It would be nice to have a formal way to represent that.</p> <p>Snedeker- Geographic, we lack representation from Southern Vermont</p> <p>Jones- Perhaps I could call Laura Sibilia</p> <p>Purvis- She recommended a gentleman who couldn't join at that time. He may be past it and I can touch base with her about that.</p>	
4	<p>Public Comment:</p> <p>Stephen Whitaker- Board losing sight of urgency of timeline for Telecom Plan. Since 2004 without a telecom plan. Scheduled for final draft in a week. Scheduled for adoption June 30. 2018, extraordinary circumstances were the joint committees choosing not to meet and adopt it. Plan is grossly deficient. Not too late for you to schedule an emergency meeting and join the hearing, could also fulfill your annual public meeting requirement. Statutory role of plan is to measure for consistency with IRP. If this plan is adopted, which I discourage, it will be in effect for 3 years and become the standard against which Consolidated's IRP is measured. You need more meetings prior to June 30. New VCBB should be the adopting entity, not the PSD. I encourage</p>	

	<p>you to discuss whether you want to join the public hearing and fulfill your obligation for an annual public meeting. Is final draft going to be prepared in June 1?</p> <p>Jonathan Gibson- I live in Shrewsbury, VT and speak as a private citizen. Was involved in our community’s telecommunications discussions since 2018. We experienced a total outage. Our community and adjoining towns all participated in 3 forums before legislature, PUC, and E 911 board regarding outage reporting rules. I think it’s a terribly overlooked, neglected, ignored issue- the vulnerability of our fiber optic systems to electric outages. I’m going to quote our community’s first engagement a letter from our selectboard to Commissioner Tierney.</p> <p>[comment regarding fiber optic resilience vs electric outages]</p> <p>Requested plan amendment to address loss of basic voice outages, asked for commitment to do so. See current public comment draft as a response that ignores the issue. Any fiber optic system will face this issue to the extent that it relies upon backup power. PSD refused to do so. Plan is deficient in a number of respects, but this is the one I’m addressing now. Plan must at least recognize the problem, and it would do well to produce some solutions.</p> <p>I’d like to associate myself with any comments made by Stephen Whitaker. He’s been a tireless advocate for consumer interest and for compliance with the law. He’s a valuable contributor to these discussions.</p> <p>Kenneth Jones- Can we actually use a public forum as a venue for our public meeting?</p> <p>Tierney- No, those are two very separate meetings.</p> <p>Purvis- We’re happy to schedule one, though.</p>	
5	<p>Next Meeting: June 17 10am</p> <p>Adjournment 11:11 am</p>	<p>Motion: Jones</p> <p>Second: Pappis</p>

Minutes Subject to Approval