



CV FIBER PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

GoToMeeting (virtual meeting only)

February 25, 2021

Members Present:

Michael Birnbaum (Plainfield), David Healy (Calais), Jeremy Matt (Plainfield), Ray Pelletier (Northfield), Jerry Diamantides (Treasurer), Siobhan Perricone (Orange), Greg Kelly (Barre City)

Members Absent:

Kenneth Jones (Montpelier), Jeremy Hansen (Berlin)

Others Present:

Henry Amistadi (Duxbury), Tom Fisher (East Montpelier), Phil Cecchini (Barre)

Called to order: 5:31PM by David Healy via GoToMeeting

Additions to the Agenda:

- None

Public comment:

- None

Approval of the February 18, 2021 meeting minutes:

- MOTION (Jeremy Matt second Siobhan Perricone) to approve the February 18, 2021 minutes as drafted with addition of statute language as pasted in Chat by Ray Pelletier. No discussion. Passed unanimously (Greg not present for vote).

Updates:

- David Healy shared brief updates on:
 - The status of grants that we might be able to apply for. The Broadband Support Grant is complicated because they are including money from Northern Borders Regional Commission (NBRC) and NBRC is being a stickler about tracking matching funds. Rob Fish said that he expects the wrinkles to be worked out sometimes around the end of March, but that he can't the application form early. It sounds like the COVID stimulus block grant of \$11million that we were hoping to get probably won't be in the current COVID stimulus bill.

- An update on WEC's progress towards fiber construction. WEC has been having regular bi-weekly meetings and they plan to apply for \$22 million loan to construct dark fiber, and the WEC Board will vote at the end of March. Our pole inventory and preliminary engineering for the Phase I route will likely help them. WEC will need a signed MOU and they have sent us a DRAFT version.
- For a legislative update, David Healy reported that the House Energy & Technology has been putting in substantial work on creating the Vermont Community Broadband Authority (CVBA). This would currently include \$6.3 million for CUDs in pre-construction grants, although it's unclear when this money might be available. This also would include an increase in the amount VEDA has been directed to loan to CUDs to \$28 million. Future loans will go through VCBA (although this won't go into effect until January 1, 2020 so it's unlikely to affect us during this current round of loans). The bill also includes a property tax exemption on fiber construction for WEC and possibly other utilities who are working with a CUD. The Senate has a related bill that will hopefully move right along.
- We're still waiting on confirmation from ValleyNet that they can still do the project in Roxbury.
- Jerry Diamantides shared a brief update on the VEDA loan application process including the estimated project cost, what the money can be used for, what we expect the interest rate to be, the term, the anticipated payback schedule, and how the money will get dispersed.

Routes Construction Priorities:

- Ray Pelletier shared slides regarding route selection and discussed some general route selection information.
- Michael Birnbaum said that he thought we should go into executive session to discuss specific details regarding route selection.
- MOTION (Ray Pelletier second Jeremy Matt) to find that premature general public knowledge would clearly place the public body or a person involved at a substantial disadvantage per 1 V.S.A. § 313(a)(1)(A) and to enter executive session, allowing board members and officers not on the committee to remain on the call. Passed unanimously. No discussion.
 - Enter executive session: 6:11
 - Exit executive session: 6:52
- MOTION (Ray Pelletier second Siobhan Perricone) recommend that Phase I consist of approximately 127 miles of service routes. Passed unanimously (Michael Birnbaum abstaining). Discussion:
 - Michael Birnbaum said that he hopes we will have flexibility to revise the routes if necessary.

Construction Opportunities:

- David Healy said that Consolidated Communications Inc would like to meet with the Planning & Development Committee next Thursday at 5:30 and he will be setting up another meeting. The bulk of this meeting will likely need to be in executive session and that we may need to sign an NDA prior to the meeting.

Roundtable:

- None

Meeting Adjourned at 6:56PM

Respectfully submitted,
Jeremy Matt, Clerk