

1 **Northwest Vermont Communications Union District**  
2 **Governing Board Draft Meeting Minutes**  
3 **December 1, 2020, 6:00 p.m.**  
4 **Zoom Virtual Meeting ID 856 5393 3168**  
5

6 **Attendance:** Sean Kio, Chair (Enosburgh Rep.), Chris Cota, Vice-Chair (Fairfax Rep), Everett McGinley  
7 (Montgomery Rep), Emily Klofft (NRPC), Heather Jewett (Bakersfield Rep.), Dominic DeRosia (Berkshire),  
8 Tara Wright (Georgia Alt.), Randy Connelly (Highgate Alt.), Matthew Miner (Enosburgh Alt.), Cindi Miner  
9 (Enosburgh Falls Rep.), Shaun Coleman (NRPC) and Stu McGowan (Alburgh Alt.).

10  
11 **Call to Order and Adjustments to the Agenda**

12 Chair Sean Kio called the meeting to order at 6:03 pm, followed by roll call. A quorum was present. E.  
13 Klofft requested discussion with Lamoille CUD and NEK regarding EDA grant be included in "Other  
14 Business".

15  
16 **Approval of Minutes**

17 Add Dominic DeRosia (Berkshire Rep.) to attendance. Change S. McGinley to S. McGowan under  
18 member updates.

19 *C. Cota motioned to accept the minutes as amended. Seconded by E. McGinley. Motion carried.*  
20

21 **Treasurer's Report**

22 E. Klofft provided the Treasurer's Report. The ending balance for CUD funds is \$5,107.50. The balance is  
23 the remaining amount from the original Vermont Community Foundation grant funds. There is one  
24 invoice for \$24.00 for Gmail that doesn't need approval given the amount. The NWCUD received a  
25 \$20,000 check from VCF that will be deposited in CUD account soon.

26  
27 *E. McGinley motioned to approve the Treasurer's Report. C. Cota seconded. Motion carried.*  
28

29 **Social Media Policy**

30 S. Kio noted this was discussed at the last meeting. The policy was previously distributed for review.  
31

32 *C. Cota motioned to accept social media policy. C. Miner seconded. Motion carried.*  
33

- 34 • Emily will send Social Media Policy to everyone for signature.

35  
36 **CUD Planning Grant Update**

37 S. Kio reported that the NWCUD proposal for hiring consultants and other activities which was approved  
38 by the Public Service Department was recently denied. Lamoille CUD may have to pay back funds they  
39 used from this same program to conduct pole surveys despite being told that it was an eligible expense.  
40 He reviewed the revision of the original tasks which needs to be approved then resubmitted to state.

41  
42 "Support Expansion of Broadband Access Clearinghouse" task will become beneficial but we likely won't  
43 see any benefit from it for at least a year. Still unclear why this vendor/platform was chosen.

1  
2 “NPRC Capacity Building & Administrative Support” task is to reimburse NRPC for staff time going back  
3 to October 1. This is an allowable expense rather than using the Vermont Community Foundation funds.  
4

5 “Wi-Fi Hotspot and Library Technology Program” task has been taken back by the state. Hotspots were  
6 being installed last week in the District by the state vendor. The state presented the idea for NWCUD to  
7 purchase equipment for libraries but now it is no longer eligible under this grant. The state can shift  
8 funding to the Department of Libraries so they will purchase the hardware. The NWCUD will get credit.  
9

10 The Chair thanked everyone who contributed to trying to get the original tasks implemented.  
11

12 There was general discussion and consensus that the Broadband Access Clearinghouse is not beneficial  
13 to the District. It was a tool that was available to the CUDs and was an allowable expense so that’s why  
14 it was included in original grant.  
15

16 T. Wright asked how the leftover funding would be shared and would it benefit our district?

17 S. Kio replied that if there is left over funding, the CUDs can determine how the money is allocated  
18 within the Districts. The logistics between DPS and Department of Libraries is unknown. It would be  
19 beneficial to know which libraries benefited from District funding.  
20

21 The Department of Libraries would send up a lending program for Chrome Books or tablets that the  
22 public can borrow and then use the Library’s wi-fi from parking lot because they are closed to the public.  
23

24 C. Cota noted he would rather the funding go to a local entity such as NRPC rather than returning it to  
25 the state where the funding might not benefit the District.  
26

27 T. Wright asked for details about the Clearinghouse. S. Kio explained that it’s a resource aggregation tool  
28 and in the long-term will be used as a take rate tool for expansion planning. The program or platform  
29 does not exist. Rural Innovation Strategies (RIS) is literally building it for Otter Creek. It was pitched by  
30 PSD as an option for the Covid Planning Grant.  
31

32 E. McGinley noted that it may be useful on the nearer term. In the Matrix proposal for Alburgh, they are  
33 requiring and initial sign-up of approximately 600 households. That’s before they build out the network.  
34 The RIS tool could be beneficial on the front end. It is basically a CRM tool. Most broadband expansion  
35 planning is based on take-rate surveying and/or sign-ups.  
36

37 S. Kio added he was familiar with Vetro FiberMap Tool. It is costly at \$25k/year. There are network  
38 management functions built in.  
39

40 C. Cota noted that the CUD is a long way from conducting a take rate surveys for specific areas.  
41

42 H. Jewett added that the state wi-fi vendor came to Bakersfield and installed wi-fi at the Town Office.  
43 The school has a wi-fi hotspot but the school wasn’t sure if the they wanted to extend the signal.  
44

1 M. Miner noted the Clearinghouse Platform is something tangible compared to leftover pool of funds  
2 where it is unknown who receive and benefit from it.

3  
4 *E. McGinley motioned to approve the revised NWCUD Covid Planning Grant task and budget and*  
5 *submission. C. Miner seconded. Motion carried. (One vote against.)*

- 6  
7 • Emily will revise and resubmit the COVID Planning Grant.

8  
9 T. Wright asked if the District would have to ask the municipalities for funding to recoup funds for a task  
10 the state rescinded which had been previously approved. S. Kio replied that the District is fiscally  
11 responsible and not the municipalities.

### 12 **CUD Planning Grant Survey**

13 S. Coleman has been trying to reach out to the Supervisory Unions to see if a survey mailer could be sent  
14 home with students. Dominic has been talking with officials at Franklin Northeast SU.

15  
16 S. Kio reviewed the postcard mailer and solicited input. The mailer will be sent out twice. The survey was  
17 boosted on Facebook. Emily noted we have had 92 survey responses and 62 are from Bakersfield. The  
18 postcard surveys will be mailed out to approximately 8,500 residents.

19  
20 After a brief discussion, the group agreed to include Post Office Boxes. Additionally, newspaper ads  
21 would be beneficial in the Messenger, Islander and Front Porch Forum.

- 22  
23 • Stu will get ad information from the Islander for Sean.
- 24 • Sean will run the ads in the Messenger, the Islander and Front Porch Forum.

25  
26  
27 *C. Cota motioned to approve Messenger advertising not to exceed \$1,200. T. Wright seconded. Motion*  
28 *carried.*

29  
30 The group agreed to run the survey until midnight on January 24<sup>th</sup>.

### 31 **Other Grant Opportunities**

#### 32 EDA Grant

33 S. Kio reported that Lamoille CUD is interested in jointly applying for an EDA grant. According to the  
34 EDA, their application would be more competitive with a regional approach by partnering with other  
35 CUDs such as NWCUD and NEK. There is a 20% match requirement.

36  
37  
38 E. Klofft added that she spoke with her colleague Leah at Lamoille RPC about the grant and match. The  
39 20% match commitment would be \$20,000. The only way the NWCUD could afford it is by using VCF  
40 funding towards match or use the BIG business plan work as match if it is eligible. Additionally, we may  
41 be eligible for decreased match rate due to the economics of the region.

42

1 NRPC has worked under an EDA Grant Program. It is very transparent and EDA will be up front about  
2 what eligible and ineligible. There will be assurances for the grant unlike the CARES Act on how the  
3 funding can and can't be spent.

4  
5 E. McGinley asked if volunteer time can be counted as match and whether we should be tracking our  
6 time. E. Klofft replied that we can and should.

7  
8 NRPC and NWCUD will meet with NEK and Lamoille CUDs in the near future to discuss being co-  
9 applicants and other grant details.

10

#### 11 USDA Rural Business Development Grant

12 E. Klofft reported the USDA Rural Business Grant is now available and PSD is encouraging CUDs to apply.  
13 The NWCUD is eligible for up to \$30,000. The LOI is due December 11 and the application is due  
14 February 26. This funding could be used to fill the engineering consultant gap from the Planning Grant.

15

16 *E. McGinley motioned to authorize the Northwest Regional Planning Commission to draft a letter of*  
17 *intent for the USDA Business Grant and submit it with Chair and Co-Chair approval. S. McGowan*  
18 *seconded. Motion carried.*

19

20 The Lamoille CUD feasibility study calls out a need for collaborative partners. They have asked if we are  
21 willing to merge. There was a discussion about a merger. There was general consensus to keep the  
22 dialogue open about merging or at least partnering while maintaining independence. Lots of unknowns  
23 for this to happen anytime soon.

24

#### 25 **Member Updates**

26

27 Enosburgh Town – S. Kio reported that Enosburgh had their new wi-fi hotspot installed and are now  
28 looking at potentially installing one across the Park that would hit Main Street.

29 Enosburg Falls Village – C. Miner reported the village trustees passed a resolution to join the CUD  
30 recently.

31 Alburgh – S. McGowan reported no updates.

32 Bakersfield – H. Jewett reported the new town office hotspot that was installed last week works really  
33 well.

34 Fairfax – C. Cota spoke with NEK about who they were using for legal. Going to be reaching out to  
35 Waitsfield for attending a Special Meeting. Fairfax will be sending out the survey through Facebook and  
36 other social media channels.

37 Georgia – T. Wright reported that the town is busy with setting the town budget.

38 Highgate – R. Connelly reported that Highgate submitted a couple sites for the wi-fi hotspot program  
39 and is waiting to hear back from PSD.

40 Montgomery – E. McGinley reported no updates.

41

#### 42 **State Emergency Broadband Plan**

43 E. Klofft reported that the Covid-19 Response Telecommunications Recovery Plan is out. There are  
44 public hearings on the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> of December. This is a short-term plan.

1  
2 *C. Cota motioned for the Chair to comment on the Covid-19 Response Telecommunications Recovery Plan*  
3 *on behalf of the NWCUD. T. Wright seconded. Motion carried.*

4  
5 **Department of Public Service (Invited)**

6 No report.

7  
8 **Other Business**

9 The Chair welcomed Cindy Miner who is the newly appointed Enosburg Falls Village representative.

10  
11 **Public Comment**

12 None.

13  
14 **Adjourn**

15 T. Wright motioned to adjourn. C. Miner seconded. Motion carried.

16  
17 *Meeting adjourned at 7:31 p.m.*