

1 **Northwest Vermont Communications Union District**
2 **Governing Board Meeting**
3 **December 15, 2020; 6:00 p.m.**
4 **Zoom Meeting (ID:848 9186 3381)**
5

6 **Attendance:** Sean Kio, Chair (Enosburgh Town Rep.), Chris Cota, Vice Chair (Fairfax Town Rep.),
7 Emily Klofft (NRPC), Stu McGowan (Alburgh Alt.), Everett McGinley (Montgomery Rep.), Dominic
8 DeRosia (Berkshire Alt.), Moustafa Mends-Cole (Sheldon Alt.), Tara Wright (Georgia Alt.), Heather
9 Jewett (Bakersfield Rep.) and Shaun Coleman (NRPC).

10
11 There was a quorum to conduct business.
12

13 **Roll Call**

14 Chair S. Kio called the meeting to order at 6:07 p.m. followed by a roll call.
15

16 **Approval of Minutes**

17 *C. Cota motioned to approve minutes. S. McGowan seconded. Motion carried.*
18

19 **Treasurer's Report**

20 E. Klofft presented the Treasurer's Report. She noted the NWCUD's debit card charge for Facebook
21 advertising was flagged by People's Trust for fraud and payment was denied. The Town of Enosburgh's
22 card was charged instead by default. Chair Kio notified the Town of the charge. The CUD will reimburse
23 the town.
24

25 There is \$5,033.50 balance in the People's Trust account. Additionally, there is \$24,882.50 balance of
26 VCF funding remaining.
27

28 Members were very appreciative of the Vermont Community Foundation funding for operational support.
29

30 *C. Cota motioned to approve Treasurer's Report. E. McGinley seconded. Motion carried.*
31

32 **CUD Planning Grant Update**

33 S. Kio reported he has been working with the state's wi-fi hotspot person for Enosburgh. There were
34 some lingering questions for Public Service about the Department of Libraries wi-fi program. S. Kio will
35 continue to follow up with Rob Fish.
36

37 **CUD Planning Grant Survey**

38 S. Kio reported that the Facebook campaign is doing well with 457 responses to date. Ads were submitted
39 to the Islander and the Messenger. Ads will be run on Front Porch Forum as soon as the CUD gets an
40 account. The FB ad currently sits at 2,300 reached and 741 clicks. Overall. close to 500 surveys have been
41 submitted.
42

43 **EDA Capacity Building Grant Application**

44 S. Kio reported this grant would be a joint application with NEK, Lamoille and NWCUD. The
45 three CUDs have been in discussion about the funding opportunity. it was agreed that EDA grant
46 funds would be distributed based on the CUD's ability to pay match. This would mean NWCUD's award
47 amount would be lower.
48

1 E. Klofft screen shared a draft budget. NWCUD would be applying for \$95,000 in funding with \$24,350
2 in match. Most of the match will come from VCF funding. The anticipated grant agreement date would
3 be in April. For the grant budget, some of the match was prorated to April (legal, administration and
4 equipment). Volunteer time can be accounted for as match.
5

6 S. Kio noted that it is not full-time work. Most CUDs would contract with a firm or an individual to be
7 program manager. Two CUDs may decide to hire the same individual or firm. For the purposes of the
8 grant, we have to develop our budgets individually. NEK has 15 years into development and are far ahead
9 of NWCUD and Lamoille.

10 A discussion ensued about the benefits of hiring a consultant or a firm as program manager. Because of
11 COVID, the CUD may be able to find an individual with tons of experience who are looking to freelance.
12 It will take someone who knows and understands the geography of the region. Given the job market in
13 Vermont and to make the compensation more desirable, it would make more sense to share a position
14 with Lamoille.
15

16
17 *E. McGinley motioned to approve the joint application of the EDA Capacity Building Grant. S. McGowan*
18 *seconded.*

19
20 E. McGinley commented that there is a surprisingly deep pool of well qualified people looking to work
21 for non-profit based on his experience with hiring program director and staff for *Cold Hollow to Canada*.

22
23 *Motion carried.*
24

- 25 • E. Klofft will inform Lea that we will jointly apply for EDA Capacity Grant with Lamoille and
26 NEK.
27

28 **Broadband Innovation Grant Update**

29 E. Klofft, S. Kio and S. Coleman met with Matrix Communications for a kick-off meeting. Part of the
30 discussion was that they may need to narrow down the geographic region. From our perspective it is not
31 by town but by area. We want to be proactive in driving the conversation to ensure feasibility is
32 appropriately addressed.
33

34 With Alburgh, their report was found to be too broad by the Public Service Department. PSD found too
35 much emphasis on the business plan end and not enough on the feasibility end. The Alburgh
36 representatives will need to request from Matrix to more clearly define the feasibility study. There was a
37 brief discussion on Matrix reports for Alburgh and Newbury. The CUD is legally responsible for the
38 funding and there needs to be clear management and expectations in terms of feasibility.
39

- 40 • S. McGowan agreed to ask K. Millman to follow up with Newbury about working with Matrix.
41

42 **RDOF Results**

43 The FCC recently held auctions to provide funding to ISPs. The purpose was to expand internet services
44 in Census Blocks where no one has 25/3 service. E. Klofft screen shared the RDOF auction awards map.
45 Consolidated Communication and Starlink were awarded for our region. There is a 7 year roll out of
46 RDOFF meaning ISPs have 7 years to complete the work or they don't get funding.
47

48 S. McGowan noted that Musk has been very aggressive about delivering Starlink. It will cost \$500 to
49 install then \$99 a month for users. There are a limited number of people nationwide that can sign up for
50 service and those available slots will go quickly.

1
2 **Member Updates**

3 Enosburgh Town – S. Kio reported that Lincoln Park now has a public wi-fi hotspot. The Highgate and
4 Richford wi-fi hotspots were supposed to be installed this week as well.

5 Alburgh – S. McGowan reported that he was in the small town of Wells and had to get access to wi-fi
6 quickly when he had no cell service. He was encouraged by the fact that Wells Library had a new hotspot
7 that he was able to use and had a decent connection.

8 Montgomery – E. McGinley reported the Montgomery public wi-fi works well but questioned why the
9 SSID is “Xfinity” and not related to the facility. S. Kio added that there is a naming convention that is
10 supposed to be used for the public wi-fi sites. Comcast recently announced that they are installing public
11 wi-fi hotspots on their own.

12 Bakersfield – H. Jewett asked if the \$8,000 for the survey was necessary. The Chair and Vice-Chair
13 reviewed how the budget amount was broken down for advertising, publishing and distributing the
14 survey. The expense was voted on and approved. The actual mailing/postage portion of the survey budget
15 is only approximately 1/3 of the budgeted amount for the survey.

16 Georgia – T. Wright had no updates.

17 Berkshire – D. DeRosia had no updates.

18 Sheldon – M. Mends-Cole reporting the new public wi-fi site was installed and works fine.

19 Fairfax – C. Cota reported that MC Fiber misunderstood the meeting time that was scheduled last week
20 for the Special Meeting.

21
22 S. Kio offered to coordinate the next special meeting with MC Fiber on January 12th.

23
24 E. McGinley will work on scheduling ISP providers for future Special Meetings.

25
26 C. Cota reported he is stepping down as Vice Chair and as Fairfax representative. Brad Docheff, the
27 Town Manager, will be filling in until a representative is found. Chris will submit a letter of resignation
28 as Vice Chair and the Town will need to amend their resolution. Emily will send the form to amend the
29 town’s resolution.

30
31 C. Cota noted the CUD doesn’t have funding for an attorney other than through VCF. He will send the
32 names of attorneys to the Chair.

33
34 E. Klofft noted that the Vermont Council on Rural Development is working on a broader statement
35 document regarding rural development, including broadband. Their intention is to form a non-partisan
36 pact with broadband being one of their priorities.

37
38 S. Coleman contacted Front Porch Forum and listed plan options/pricing for the group.

39
40 **Dept. of Public Service Update**

41 No report.

42
43 **Other Business**

44 S. Kio noted he reviewed the clearinghouse web tool and CRM from Rural Innovations Strategies and
45 reached out to the company for suggestions. The clearinghouse is still being developed.

46
47 Everyone thanked Chris for his time and efforts and wished him well.

48
49 **Public Comment**

50 None.

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Adjourn

E. McGinley motioned to adjourn. C. Cota seconded. Motion carried.

Meeting adjourned at 7:19 pm.