

1 **Northwest Communications Union District**
2 **August 26, 2020 Draft Minutes**
3 **Virtual Meeting (Zoom Meeting ID: 850 1431 5183)**
4

5 **Attendance:** Sean Kio, Chair (Enosburgh), Christopher Cota Vice-Chair (Fairfax), Everett McGinley
6 (Montgomery), Tara Wright (Georgia), Catherine Dimitruk (NRPC), Brad Docheff (Fairfax), Ian Scott
7 (Montgomery), Emily Klofft (NRPC), Harry Goldhagen, and Dylan Hamel.
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9 **Call to Order and Adjustments to the Agenda**

10 S. Kio called the meeting to order at 4:32 p.m. No adjustments to the agenda.
11

12 **Roll Call**

13 See Attendance above.
14

15 **Approval of Minutes**

16 *C. Cota motioned to approve the amended minutes. E. McGinley seconded. Motion carried.*
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18 **Treasurer's Report - NRPC**

19 C. Dimitruk reported that there were no changes from the previous Treasurer's Report. C. Dimitruk
20 explained that there were two options for the CUD: either NRPC could act as the fiscal agent for the
21 CUD or the CUD could open an independent bank account after filing for a tax identification number
22 with the Vermont Secretary of State.
23

24 E. McGinley stated that it would be good for the CUD to have its own bank account and EIN number
25 for future grants.
26

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

29 *E. McGinley motioned to authorize S. Kio to file for a state tax identification number and open a bank
30 account, C. Cota seconded. Motion carried.*
31

32 **Acceptance of New Members**

33 S. Kio reported that Sheldon is now a member. The District passed a resolution at the organizational
34 meeting to accept any municipality in the region that has signed the resolution to join the NWCUD.
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36 **CUD Insurance – Vice Chair**

37 C. Cota reported that he was unable to find an insurance policy that would accept the CUD. To have
38 insurance, the CUD will need to have an EIN number, plan for governing body, and clearer action
39 plan.
40

41 **Meeting Housekeeping (Meeting Notice Postings, Recordings)- NRPC**

42 S. Kio stated that he can develop a basic website for posting meeting agendas and minutes by mid-
43 September. C. Dimitruk stated that NRPC can pay the cost of the website until the CUD has access to
44 a bank account for reimbursement. NRPC will continue sending agendas to local newspapers and
45 the town clerks of member towns.
46

1 E. McGinley stated that he supports open meetings, but is worried how a recording of the CUD
2 meetings could be perceived out of context. B. Doucheff stated he believes recording meetings is in
3 the spirit of open meeting law. C. Cota and S. Kio concur. Moving forward, meetings will be recorded
4 and NRPC will store them in case of a public records request.

6 **Goals and Objectives**

7 E. McGinley reported on his summary of the goals & objectives of other CUDs. Most CUDs focus on
8 fiber and universal access. There are different ways to define universal access amongst the CUDs. E,
9 McGinley recommended that the NWCUD's goals and objectives focus on fiber and that the CUD
10 should use the language of "every home and business" to define universal access. A more detailed
11 definition of universal access could be developed for use in RFPs.

12
13 T. Wright stated that it is important that the CUD prioritize its data collection & planning efforts
14 those currently unserved or underserved. The current plan of VELCO to collect data on utility poles
15 may not reach those most underserved.

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17 C. Cota explained that VELCO current data collection plan is to use LIDAR along roads throughout
18 the state to collect information on utility poles. It is expected that this would provide data on
19 roughly 80% of the utility poles.

20
21 T. Wright noted that this approach will not provide information on utility poles not located on
22 roadways and that these poles are likely to be important for those most underserved.

23
24 There was a general discussion about data collection and the importance of prioritizing data
25 collection in areas currently unserved and underserved.

26
27 C. Cota presented on a draft list of goals & mission statement he had prepared. Based on the
28 previous discussions of the CUD, he proposed three core values: build beyond today, affordability,
29 and universal access.

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31 There was a discussion of these core values. The focus of the goals should be on universal access,
32 affordability and serving the unserved and underserved first, then introducing competition in areas
33 served by only 1 provider.

34
35 E. McGinley mentioned that it was important that the CUD decided whether or not any fiber build-
36 out will be open access, or if the CUD will consider developing a public-private partnership with a
37 private ISP that would not be open access. S. Kio stated that he believes it is important for any
38 network to be open access.

39
40 C. Cota asked whether the CUD should have a goal of being a community-owned ISP. S. Kio stated
41 that the results of the feasibility study & business plan will be important for understanding what
42 business model will be best. The term community-owned may have negative connotations in the
43 region.

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45 C. Cota stated that he will provide an updated draft of the goals for the next meeting of the
46 governing board.

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COVID Planning Grant Program (Chair)

S. Kio reported that he spoke to consultants and they estimated that data collection efforts would take 3-6 months. All funds must be expended by December 31st.

C. Cota asked if COVID Planning Grant funding could be used first, and then the Broadband Innovation Grant funds second. E. Klofft reported that the Broadband Innovation Grant funds must be spent within 6 months.

S. Kio said given that the NWCUD must first complete the feasibility study & business plan, and that the funds for the planning grant must be spent by December 31st, it is not likely that planning grant funds could be used for data collection efforts.

One other use of funds would be to expand public Wi-Fi zones to immediately provide some access to broadband for un- and underserved households, especially those with school-aged children. S. Kio asked representatives to send a list of potential locations for wi-fi hotspots to him.

ISP Invitations

C. Cota reported that representatives from Utopia and Ammom Fiber are willing to meet with the CUD. These meetings are scheduled Tuesday and Wednesday at 4 PM.

Data Collection

C. Cota reported that he had reached out to Rob Fish about the Department’s data collection efforts. Due to staffing issues with the Department there have not been updates to the priority locations map.

Member Updates

Fairfax: None

Georgia: None

Enosburgh: S. Kio reported that Enosburg Falls is considered a separate municipality for the purposes of the CUD. Dialogue regarding the Village joining the CUD is ongoing.

Montgomery - E. McGinley reported that the technical director of the Franklin Northeast Supervisory Union may be interested in joining the Board as an at-large member, or may become Berkshire’s representative to the CUD if Berkshire votes to join.

Public Service Department

E. McGinley stated that the press release related to the first round of the Connectivity Initiative did not list the locations of funded projects and he had not heard from Rob Fish regarding whether any projects in the CUD region were funded.

1 There is a discussion around the upcoming legislative hearings related to broadband. E. Klofft
2 agreed to draft a letter that CUD representatives could send to state representatives.

3

4 **Other Business-** None

5

6 **Adjourn**

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

8

9 Meeting adjourned at 6:20 p.m.

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