

1 **Northwest Vermont Communications Union District**
2 **Governing Board Draft Meeting Minutes**
3 **January 26, 2020, 6:00 p.m.**
4 **Zoom Virtual Meeting**
5

6 **Attendance:** Ken Millman (Alburgh Rep.), Dave Stanley (Fairfax Rep.), Charen Fegard (Richford Rep.),
7 Sean Kio, Chair (Enosburgh Rep.), Emily Klofft (NRPC), Randy Connelly (Highgate Alt.), Stu McGowan
8 (Alburgh Alt.), Dominic DeRosia (Berkshire (Rep.)), Everett McGinley (Montgomery Rep.), Moustafa
9 Mends-Cole (Sheldon Alt.), Heather Jewett (Bakersfield Rep.), and Shaun Coleman (NRPC).

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

12 Chair S. Kio called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm. There were no agenda adjustments.
13

14 **Approval of Minutes**

15 *E. McGinley motioned to approve the minutes from the January 12th meeting. K. Millman seconded.*
16 *Motion carried.*
17

18 **Treasurer's Report**

19 E. Klofft provided the Treasurer's Report. The balance of bank account is \$58,210.63. There are invoices
20 totaling \$15,492.76. The balance of the DPS Planning Grant is \$32,538.64. Rob Fish from DPS has not
21 confirmed whether or not there has been an extension to the grant. VCF balance is \$24,882.50.
22

23 *K. Millman motioned to accept the Treasurer's Report. S. McGowan seconded. Motion carried.*
24

25 **USDA Rural Business Development Grant**

26 E. Klofft reported that a complication came up related to the protected borrower status that VTEL has
27 with USDA. USDA cannot fund projects that would directly compete with VTEL nor can the funds be used
28 to hire someone to help with capital fund raising. CUD proposals for feasibility and not infrastructure
29 may be eligible. Additionally, hiring a consultant to help with the open access model and business
30 planning might be eligible. There are a lot of conversations with legislative delegation and USDA staff
31 regarding the VTEL issue. The protect borrower status expires in 2026. VTEL is not providing level of
32 service they should be.
33

34 The next step for the grant is to develop a detailed project description and submit to USDA state office
35 to determine whether the activities would be eligible by the federal USDA office. The potential funding
36 up to \$30,000 with no match. This funding would be available in the fall.
37

38 S. Kio noted that he, S. Coleman and E. Klofft met with Matrix last week for a status update on the
39 feasibility study and business plan. They informed Matrix that the open access model must be
40 addressed. K. Millman noted Alburgh's experiences with Matrix and the Public Service Department.
41

42 **Wi-Fi Hot Spot Opportunity**

43 S. Kio reported that DPS deployed another 190 hot spots across the state at the end of the year. There
44 were 14 in our area.
45

46 There is a new opportunity through the Information Technology Disaster Resource Center (ITDRC).
47 ITDRC launched projectConnect, which is a nationwide initiative to provide free community WiFi

1 installations to connect students and families to the internet, especially those living in rural and
2 underserved communities (<https://www.itdrc.org/covid-19/projectconnect>).

3
4 E. McGinley asked whether it will pay for monthly ISP service fees or is just the hardware. S. Kio noted
5 that it is likely just hardware. It is another opportunity for adding hotspots in your community.
6

7 **Legislative Update**

8 S. Kio reported the current budget proposal is \$2.5M for customer line assistance program. It doesn't
9 seem to be an effective program given the costs of installation from ISPs. There is \$1.5M for pole survey
10 data collection. There is \$15.9M to create a broadband deployment program.
11

12 E. Klofft noted the House Energy and Technology Committee meeting drafted a bill that proposes a Vt
13 Community Broadband Authority similar to the former VT Telecommunications Authority. She provided
14 a summary of what's included in the draft bill and emailed it to members.
15

16 S. Coleman concurred that the elements that are in the draft bill aligns with the various testimonies that
17 have been held by the Committee. Several utilities that testified were willing to work with CUDs. Some
18 of the CUDs that are further along were willing to share lessons learned with some of the younger CUDs.
19

20 **CUD Accelerator Program**

21 S. Kio reported that the Vermont Community Foundation is offering a series of trainings entitled the
22 CUD Accelerator Program. Each District was asked to send no more than 4 members per training
23 session. A poll will be sent out for session sign-ups. Sessions begin Feb. 1 and run through March.
24

25 **Member Updates**

26 Alburgh – K. Millman reported that Alburgh is going to put Matrix contract to voters on May 11th and
27 not Town Meeting Day.

28 Montgomery – E. McGinley had no updates.

29 Bakersfield – H. Jewett had no updates.

30 Fairfax – D. Stanley noted he is the new Fairfax Representative.

31 Richford – C. Fegard had no updates.

32 Berkshire – D. DeRosia had no updates.

33 Sheldon – M. Mends-Cole had an update about a server at the fire station but may be referring to
34 something else that's not CUD related.

35 Highgate – R. Connelly had no reports.

36 NRPC – Met with Matrix and will be sharing our survey data results with them. They were proposing a
37 new survey with similar questions to the one currently released by NWCUD. There was a brief
38 discussion about the survey. Members will be provided with Town-by-Town results.

39 Enosburgh Town – S. Kio reported that he may only have 2 meetings left before being out on paternal
40 leave. Currently, he is the only officer and the group needs a Vice-Chair. E. McGinley requested adding
41 election of Vice-Chair on the next agenda.
42

43 **Department of Public Service**

44 No report.
45

46 **Public Comment**

47 None.

1

2 **Other Business**

3 S. Kio asked to meet with NRPC to outreach to non-member communities in Franklin and Grand Isle. S.
4 Coleman agreed assist in that effort.

5

6 **Adjourn**

7 *E. McGinley motioned to adjourn. K. Millman seconded. Motion carried.*

8

9 Meeting adjourned at 6:50 pm.