

1 **Northwest Vermont Communications Union District**  
2 **Governing Board Draft Meeting Minutes**  
3 **February 9, 2021 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.), Jacob Kane  
9 (Sheldon Alt.), Brenda Churchill (Bakersfield Rep.), JR (Northwest Access TV), Elizabeth Nance (Swanton  
10 Village and Town) and Shaun Coleman (NRPC).

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

13 Chair S. Kio called the meeting to order at 6:08 pm. There were no agenda adjustments.  
14

15 **Approval of Minutes**

16 *K. Millman motioned to approve the minutes from the January 26<sup>th</sup> meeting. S. McGowan seconded.*  
17 *Motion carried.*  
18

19 **Treasurer's Report**

20 E. Klofft provided the Treasurer's Report. The balance of the bank account is \$58,198.14. There are  
21 invoices totaling \$15,492.76. The balance of the DPS Planning Grant is \$32,538.64. Rob Fish from DPS  
22 has not confirmed whether or not there has been an extension to the DPS grant. VCF funding has a  
23 balance of \$24,870.01.  
24

25 *K. Millman motioned to accept the Treasurer's Report. B. Churchill seconded. Motion carried.*  
26

27 **Election of Vice-Chair**

28 S. Kio opened nominations for Vice Chair.

29 K. Millman nominated Stu McGowan as Vice Chair.

30 Chair S. Kio asked for further nominations. There were none.

31 K. Millman motioned to close nominations. D. DeRosia seconded.

32 Chair S. Kio called for a vote for electing Stu McGowan as Vice Chair. All voted in favor.

33 Chair S. Kio announced Stu McGowan is now Vice Chair of the NWVTCUD by unanimous vote.  
34

35 **CUD Subcommittees**

36 S. Kio led a discussion about the need for getting members signed up for subcommittees such as  
37 Finance, Communications and Project Management/Operations. This led to a discussion about getting  
38 more community members involved with the organization and promotional outreach. S. Kio noted that  
39 he hoped to meet with several municipal boards in the region for the purpose of having them officially  
40 join the CUD. S. Coleman will assist in this effort.  
41

42 **USDA Rural Business Development Grant**

43 E. Klofft provided an overview of the grant. She noted that one potential impediment related to USDA  
44 funding is the protected borrower status that VTEL has in Vermont having previously received USDA  
45 Reconnect Funds. This means that USDA can't fund projects in Vermont that would directly compete  
46 with VTEL. Eligibility for planning related work under the grant is still being reviewed by USDA. The grant  
47 would help fund the implementation of the feasibility study and business plan currently in development.

1 The grant proposal excludes infrastructure and capital fundraising efforts due to the protected borrower  
2 status impediment previously mentioned.

3  
4 E. Klofft reviewed the handout of the draft budget for the grant. The budget for a consultant is  
5 \$29,972.50 and is based on cost proposals submitted by consultants for the feasibility study and  
6 business plan.

7  
8 For the proposal to be successful, we need to demonstrate job creation and retention. Local  
9 representatives will need to solicit businesses for letters of support. A draft one pager LOI / talking  
10 points was drafted by the Chair and NRPC for representatives to use. LOIs are needed by mid-March so  
11 the effort should begin sooner rather than later. The letters of support must be written on company  
12 letterhead. The draft will be distributed to the board by the end of the week.

### 13 14 **EDA Grant Opportunity**

15 E. Klofft provided an overview of the draft grant proposal. She reported that there are on-going  
16 discussions about collaboration between NWCUD, NEK and Lamoille CUDs under the grant. The current  
17 proposed project is 18 months in duration (June 2021 to Dec 2022) at a cost of approximately \$200,000.  
18 It includes hiring a project coordinator, a financing consultant, a network design engineer consultant and  
19 an organizational consultant for analysis, facilitation and roadmap. Our role and portion of grant would  
20 be smaller given the match requirement which is \$10,000.

21  
22 S. Kio reported that NEK and Lamoille CUDs have different open access models than NWCUD. NWCUD's  
23 vision of an open access model has caught the attention of the House Energy and Technology  
24 Committee. He will likely be asked by committee members to clarify some of the details of the model. S.  
25 Coleman added that the Committee has been receiving testimony from other CUDs and ISPs with  
26 differing versions of open access than what NWCUD is considering.

27  
28 E. Klofft asked whether the members still want to be co-applicants on the grant given the match  
29 requirement and direction of the other CUDs. There are a few outstanding questions such as how match  
30 is applied and use of the VCF funding. S. McGowan and S. Kio spoke in favor of moving forward noting  
31 that we have to take the opportunity despite the constraints.

### 32 33 **CUD Survey Update**

34 S. Kio reviewed the results of the CUD's first broadband survey for residents. A town-by-town  
35 breakdown of the results will be made available to the members. S. McGowan noted that the results  
36 show that so many people are at a disadvantage due to broadband and the current pandemic has  
37 highlighted the need.

38  
39 J. Kane added that of concern is bandwidth, latency and monthly transfer. Comcast just rolled out a 1.2  
40 TB cap and customers are concerned. The monthly transfer is key given the way people are using the  
41 internet during the pandemic with remote learning, telehealth and remote work.

### 42 43 **Legislative Update**

44 S. Kio reported that he met briefly with Senator Brock who is a member of the Senate Finance  
45 Committee and provided him an update of CUD activity and needs. The House Energy and Technology  
46 Committee's current drafted bill includes broadband workforce development which is something this  
47 CUD has been advocating for. All the CUDs and private providers will be fighting for the same workforce

1 resources. Hopefully the legislature will work fiber and internet technician certification programs into  
2 tech programs across the state.

3  
4 S. Coleman noted that there have been a lot of testimonies taken by Committee during the past two  
5 weeks. Many different groups have provided testimony such ISPs, power companies, and CUDs among  
6 others. RPCs have been asked to provide testimony as well about their role with CUDs. There is still  
7 uncertainty what the new Federal \$1.9T Covid Relief Bill will bring for broadband activities in the state.  
8

### 9 **CUD Accelerator Program**

10 S. Kio provided a quick overview of the Vermont Community Foundation’s program and encouraged  
11 members to attend if they are able. The sessions are being recorded and will be made available.  
12

### 13 **Member Updates**

14 Enosburgh Town – S. Kio reported that he may only have 1 meeting left before being out on paternal  
15 leave. He received an email from Starlink for sign-up on a first come first serve basis. Target date is mid-  
16 21. Starlink put up 120 satellites in January and another 120 satellites last week.

17 Bakersfield – B. Churchill was introduced as the new representative for Bakersfield.

18 Sheldon – J. Kane was introduced as the new representative for Sheldon.

19 Alburgh – S. McGowan had no updates and is encouraged that new members are filling in for former  
20 members who could no longer attend.

21 Richford – C. Fegard reported she is hopeful that Richford will have an updated municipal website soon.

22 Montgomery – E. McGinley had no updates. He attended the CUD accelerator meeting and found it very  
23 useful. He encouraged other members to attend future sessions.

24 Berkshire – D. DeRosia had no updates.

25 NRPC – Met with Matrix Design and shared our raw data survey results with them. They are currently  
26 doing an analysis of road miles and pole locations. They are building a statistical tool to determine  
27 priority based on data we provided them such as homebound school children with no or limited access.  
28 Those meetings are bi-weekly on Thursdays at noon. Anyone is invited to attend.  
29

### 30 **Department of Public Service**

31 No report. S.Kio has talked to Rob several times regarding testimonies about work force and service.  
32

### 33 **Public Comment**

34 None.

### 36 **Other Business**

37 None.  
38

### 39 **Adjourn**

40 *B. Churchill motioned to adjourn. C. Fegard seconded. Motion carried.*

41  
42 Meeting adjourned at 7:18 pm.