

1 **Northwest Vermont Communications Union District**
2 **Governing Board Draft Meeting Minutes**
3 **March 23, 2021 6:00 p.m.**
4 **Zoom Virtual Meeting**
5

6 **Attendance:** Sean Kio (Enosburgh Town Rep.), Ken Millman (Alburgh Rep.), Dave Stanley (Fairfax Rep.),
7 Mary Kay Raymond (Fairfax Alt.), Tara Wright (Georgia Alt.), Emily Klofft (NRPC), Everett McGinley
8 (Montgomery Rep.), Brenda Churchill (Bakersfield Alt.), Charen Fegard (Richford Rep.), J.R. Cox
9 (NWTV/Alburgh Alt.), Heather Jewett (Bakersfield Rep.), Shaun Coleman (NRPC) and Steve Whittaker
10 (public).
11

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

13 Chair S. Kio called the meeting to order at 6:03 pm. Subcommittee was added to the agenda.
14 *M.K. Raymond motioned to accept the agenda change. K. Millman seconded. Motion carried.*
15

16 **Approval of Minutes**

17 *E. McGinley motioned to approve the minutes from the March 9th meeting. M.K. Raymond seconded.*
18 *Motion carried.*
19

20 **Treasurer’s Report**

21 E. Klofft provided the Treasurer’s Report. The balance of the bank account is \$58,185.65. There are
22 invoices totaling \$15,492.76. Invoices are held up because there has been no extension granted to the
23 planning grant by the legislature. It is expected to happen soon. The balance of the DPS Planning Grant
24 is \$32,538.64. Still waiting for DPS for an extension approval. VCF funding has a balance of \$24,857.52.
25

26 *M.K. Raymond motioned to approve the Treasurer’s Report. K. Millman seconded. Motion carried.*
27

28 **USDA Rural Business Development Grant**

29 E. Klofft reported that the grant is moving forward. There are 7 letters of support thus far. The grant is
30 for \$30,000 to cover the costs of bringing on a consultant/program manager. She provided a resolution
31 for the CUD to review and adopt for submitting an application to the USDA Rural Development Grant.
32 The resolution also authorizes the Chair to sign all grant related documents.
33

34 *E. McGinley motioned to execute the resolution for the NWCUD application to the USDA Rural*
35 *Development Grant program. D. Stanley seconded. Motion carried.*
36

37 **Legislative Update (H.360 & American Rescue Plan Act)**

38 E. Klofft reported that H360 will likely be passed by House this week. Currently, municipalities are
39 eligible for 75% funding of their annual budget and that likely there will be county level funding
40 distributed evenly as well. Details are still being worked out at the legislature.
41

42 E. McGinley noted that part of the bill includes \$150M in funding for broadband. It remains to be seen if
43 the money will pass through the municipalities or directly to the CUDs.
44

45 C. Fegard noted that the VLCT is advising municipalities not to give the money out until they are sure
46 that different organizations can not get it through the state or through other means. There are other
47 entities who are hoping to capitalize on the funding.

1
2 S. Coleman added that there have been several firms that are already reaching out to municipalities
3 likely in anticipation of the funding that is coming. NRPC will be sending out information to communities
4 regarding the American Rescue Plan funding. There is no need to hurry up and spend the money
5 because there is a longer timeline for when the funding must be spent than the CARES Act.
6

7 S. Whittaker from the public asked the Chair to speak about H360. The bill as currently written does not
8 include a CUD member as part of the governing board of the new Vermont Broadband Authority.
9

10 E. McGinley asked where the Public Service Department stands on how the funding is being distributed
11 and whether they favor open access? S. Coleman replied that Rob Fish from Public Service could happily
12 answer questions about PSD's position.
13

14 H. Jewett noted she was contacted by the Information Technology Disaster Resource Center regarding
15 free wi-fi equipment and installation and asked for clarification. S. Coleman explained that ITDRC has
16 been vetted by Public Service and will be working their way through Vermont starting this week. They
17 are working off a list of wi-fi requests that Public Service could not fulfill at the end of last year. Dustin Li
18 is the point of contact. Dustin is working with Randy Connelly and the Town of Highgate currently. Shaun
19 also spoke with the Swanton Town Administrator about the program as well.
20

21 **Partnerships with other CUDs/VCUDA**

22 S. Kio said he was informed about the board's interest in joining VCUDA. He cited some of the reasons
23 why NWCUD was reluctant to join in 2020. E. McGinley noted that VCUDA is going to be a voice to the
24 legislature and PSD moving forward and it would be good to add our voice to the group. M.K. Raymond
25 agreed that it would be beneficial to include our voice in the discussions at the state level. They are not
26 going to be a governing body but collectively they are going to have a greater voice.
27

28 T. Wright asked if we are going to join VCUDA then are we going to appoint members to VCUDA and are
29 we authorizing them to vote on matters? S. Kio replied that no action would be taken by VCUDA without
30 giving their members a chance to discuss it with their governing boards. S. Kio, T. Wright and M.K.
31 Raymond offered to represent NWCUD. S. Kio will reach out to Kristen Fountain to find out what it takes
32 to join and if they have a resolution the CUD will need to execute.
33

34 *E. McGinley motioned to authorize Chair, Sean Kio to proceed with having NWCUD join VCUDA. M.K.*
35 *Raymond seconded. Motion carried.*
36

37 **Member Updates**

38 Montgomery: E. McGinley reported that the Montgomery Selectboard was working on coming up with
39 letters of recommendation for the USDA grant.
40

41 Fairfax: M.K. Raymond added that she has received a lot of feedback from outside of the District about
42 from individuals about remote work access. D. Raymond added that he reached out to the Town
43 Manager about assistance with generating letters of support.
44

45 Alburgh: K. Millman reported that he was able to only get 3 letters of support.
46

47 Enosburgh: S. Kio reported that he presented the survey results to local boards. There wasn't much of a
48 reaction. He took that to mean that the CUD needs to provide more education and outreach.

1
2 Richford: C. Fegard reported that she received only 3 or 4 letters thus far.

3 Georgia: T. Wright reported that Carolyn Branagan is now on the Selectboard. Carl Rosenquist might be
4 able to offer some support.
5

6 **Subcommittees**

7 S. Kio reported that we need to assign a lead for each of the committees with the hope that each
8 member of the CUD signs up for at least one committee. The three subcommittees are communications,
9 management/operations and finance. At the next meeting, we should formerly assign members to
10 subcommittees. The operations subcommittee can start working on the process of bringing on a
11 program manager. The communications subcommittee can begin formulating outreach and marketing.
12

13 E. Klofft noted that the annual meeting will be on the second Tuesday of May. By the last Monday of
14 April, all CUD representatives and alternates will need to be reappointed by their local boards. There is
15 no term limits on the appointments.
16

17 **Public Comment**

18 Steve Whittaker from Montpelier commented on the importance of members reporting CUD activities
19 to their respective municipal boards. He also commented on attorney Paul Guilliani's interpretation of
20 open meeting law in relation with VCUDA email exchanges. He also provided comments on Open Access
21 Models noting that shared fiber should be a necessity in the state's 10-year Telecomm Plan update. He
22 also cautioned that there won't be any fiber builders available when construction begins. This shortage
23 is another argument for shared open access fiber.
24

25 *E. McGinley motioned that the Board enter into Executive Session to discuss potential vendor contracts
26 for the USDA Rural Business Development Grant whereas premature public knowledge would clearly
27 place the public body or person involved at a substantial disadvantage.*

28 *S. Kio amended the motion to invite NRPC staff members. M.K. Raymond seconded. Motion carried.*
29

30 *B. Churchill motioned to end Executive Session. T. Wright seconded. Motion carried.*
31

32 *H. Jewett motioned to forgo the RFP process and preselect a consultant for the USDA Rural Business
33 Development grant. B. Churchill seconded. Motion carried.*
34

35 C. Fegard asked the group again for a short list of questions for the House Energy and Technology
36 Committee regarding the distribution of funds (by mile or parsed out by CUD or other). She knows
37 members and can try to get answers. E. Klofft noted she didn't receive any questions when she emailed
38 the group about this.
39

40 B. Churchill asked for GMP and COOP information be added to next agenda.
41

42 **Adjourn**

43 *M.K. Raymond motioned to adjourn. C. Fegard seconded. Motion carried.*
44

45 Meeting adjourned at 7:05 p.m.
46