



CV FIBER BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

GoToMeeting (virtual meeting only)

September 10, 2020

Members Present:

Michael Birnbaum (Plainfield), David Healy (Calais), Siobhan Perricone (Orange), Ken Jones (Montpelier), Jeremy Matt (Plainfield), Ray Pelletier (Northfield), Jerry Diamantides (Berlin)

Others Present:

Henry Amistadi (Duxbury), Tim Shea

Called to order: 5:40PM by David Healy via GoToMeeting

Additions to the Agenda:

- Jeremy Matt suggested adding approval of the June 30, 2020 meeting minutes

Public comment:

- None

Approval of minutes of the August 11, 2020 meeting minutes:

- Tabled until next meeting

COVID Grant Activity Update from Tim Shea:

- Tim Shea reported that he has been meeting with a few board members to get a sense of where CVFiber is and what needs to be done. He has also started to work on the VEDA application and has been working on a more detailed schedule. Some of the roles need to get more fleshed out in terms of who will be doing what. CVFiber also needs to get a better sense of where the CVFiber role ends and where Cloud Alliance will pick up in terms of the wireless project if that's funded. Michael Birnbaum said that Interisle will need to be included in that discussion
- Ray Pelletier asked if we were required to and if we did submit the feasibility study and the business plan for approval? David Healy noted that the feasibility study has been approved by the public service department and that we've received an email saying that the business plan will be approved, but that we haven't gotten the actual approval yet.

- Ken Jones said that he thinks we're farther out from a VEDA application that people are thinking. VEDA is a pretty conservative organization, and we have no track record. It's not just that we don't have the operational skill set; we don't have any resource.
- Michael Birnbaum said that he thinks we're closer than Ken suggested, but he agrees that we're a ways out.

ISP RFP:

- Jerry Diamantides asked how many companies other than ValleyNet exist who could be an ISP and operator for us. David Healy and Michael Birnbaum listed a few possibilities including Cloud Alliance, Waitsfield Champlain, Telecom, TuuCow, Tilson, and Otelco,
- Michael Birnbaum said that before we prepare an RFP, we need to know who will own the fiber on poles with respect to WEC as that will have a large effect on costs.
- Siobhan Perricone asked if that means we can't make a decision at this point
- Ray Pelletier said he doesn't think who owns the infrastructure is relevant as we are likely going to end up working with multiple utilities anyway. Whoever we pick will need to be flexible
- Ken Jones said that he doesn't think we can prepare an RFP because we don't have the detail necessary for someone to bid. Instead we need to put out an RFQ or an RFI: we need potential contractors to respond with what they can do. The document we produce should provide a list of required tasks and potential providers. These operational components may include:
 - Designing and engineering our network
 - Constructing our network
 - Maintaining our network
 - Operate and support our network subscribers
 - Marketing
- Ray Pelletier said he thinks it would be a waste of several weeks to do an RFI – in his experience he hasn't gotten much interest from RFIs. He thinks that we do have the information required to prepare an RFP.
- Michael Birnbaum said that he's had a better experience with RFIs in VT. Regardless, we should do something. However, the results of the RDOF auction will have a very big affect and it will be very hard for potential contractors to bid without knowing the results of the RDOF auction.
- Siobhan Perricone pointed out that WEC has not been quick to make decisions in the past and asked if we can afford to wait for WEC.
- Michael Birnbaum said that he thinks the RDOF process will force WEC to decide soon
- David Healy asked if we should task Tim Shea with preparing the RF(P/Q/I)
- Jerry Diamantides said yes, it is what we hired him for
- Henry Amistadi said that we need to decide on initial model and where we want to go. He thinks that we might be able to get somewhere in between an RFP and an RFI. He also thinks that initially we will have to go with the model where we sub out everything as we have no paid staff. However, he thinks that the RF(P/Q/I) should ask for options. He also thinks that this document should sell CVFiber and highlight the business opportunities for the potential contractors. Lastly, he noted that we will also need to contact potential upstream providers to see who is willing to work with us.

- Michael Birnbaum want to clarify the structure that he sees the project taking. The middle mile is different from the upstream providers. The upstream providers are First Light and some local providers (Consolidated, etc.). However, the contractor we hire will be responsible for figuring out who will be providing the upstream services. Middle mile is the fiber on the poles, the last mile is the drops to the houses. The local incumbent local providers won't provide middle mile service to us because they want to compete with us.
- David Healy said that he will have Tim Shea begin working on a RF(P/Q/I) and that he will ask to have done in the next two weeks.
- Jeremy Matt asked if we can ask the board to select the route(s) we plan to build first
- Jerry Diamantides asked if we need to wait for WEC/RDOF before deciding a route
- Ken Jones said that he doesn't think it's a board decision. Instead, he thinks we need to start with where the customers are. Board members should organize/solicit commitments from their communities and we should go with the area that has the highest response
- Michael Birnbaum said that we should use demand aggregation software. That software sets up zones and each zone competes with the others to see where the highest interest is. He noted that there are two companies he's aware of that provide this service (COS systems and Crowd Fiber). Crowd Fiber was purchased by NRTC. He thinks the cost is approximately \$500/month (possibly plus some onboarding costs) and that it seems that the cost has been increasing lately
- Jerry Diamantides asked if we can add demand aggregation to Tim Shea's to do list
- David Healy noted that from the survey we have a list of people who gave their email addresses and who said they would give gifts or purchase pre-subscriptions. That's the beginning of a direct mail
- Ken Jones asked if each build project could be a zone? Michael Birnbaum said maybe, but they might be too big
- MOTION (Michael Birnbaum, second Jeremy Matt): to task Tim Shea with investigating demand aggregation and to have Michael Birnbaum, Jerry Diamantides, Henry Amistadi work with Tim on that. Motion passed unanimously. No discussion

WEC Partnership / RDOF Update:

- Michael Birnbaum noted that we can't really talk about the details of RDOF and the WEC partnership in open meeting. In a general sense, he reported that NRTC has prepared a detailed financial model that looks interesting.

Updates on Schedules and Assignments:

- David Healy noted that he has tasked Tim Shea with updating the schedule and task assignment and asked if Tim had any updates. Tim said that he doesn't really an update at this point – he's still working on it

Approval of the June 30, 2020 meeting minutes:

- MOTION (Jeremy Matt, second Siobhan Perricone): to approve the June 30, 2020 minutes as drafted by Jeremy Matt. Motion passed unanimously (Michael Birnbaum abstaining). No discussion

Other Business:

- David Healy noted that the Legislature is considering performing a State-wide pole survey and that he has approximately 50/50 confidence that it will happen. He is going to be testifying on this subject tomorrow at 10:30
- David Healy reported that the \$2 million requested by the Governor to provide matching funds to CUDs has been reduced to \$1.5 million as the legislature realized that most CUDs would not be able to take advantage of these funds in the next year.
- Henry Amistadi said that he thinks it is important to make the results of the pole survey public. He thinks that the project would get much more pushback from Consolidated etc. if the project is billed as providing private information to CUDs rather than providing public information.
- Ken Jones responded that the results of this survey would be very valuable to the self-driving car companies. David Healy expanded on this by saying that the project would generate a complete horizontal lidar of the State, which is what Tesla is using. Michael Birnbaum noted that the pole information that would be useful to us is only a very small part of the data the proposed survey will collect
- David Healy reported that VCUDA is asking for \$10,000 from the Vermont Community Fund to support the organization.
- David Healy noted that Jeremy Hansen, David Healy, and Tim Shea will be on the call with Representative Peter Welch on September 16th to discuss the challenges facing CUDs
- David Healy asked Ken Jones if he knew anything about the schedule for decision on the second round of connect VT funding. Ken said that there is a meeting tomorrow, but he's not sure that a decision will be reached.

Meeting Adjourned at 6:59PM

Respectfully submitted,
Jeremy Matt, Clerk