



November 13, 2018 Governing Board Meeting

Berlin Elementary School
372 Paine Turnpike N, Berlin, VT

6:00pm

Minutes

Present: Governing Board Delegates: Elliott Bent (Barre City for Chris Riddell), Joshua Jarvis (Barre Town), Jeremy Hansen (Chair, Berlin), Andrew Gilbert (Cabot), Scott Bassage (Calais for David Healy), Bob Klein (East Montpelier), Jim Barlow (Marshfield), Phil Hyjek (Vice Chair, Middlesex), Dan Jones (Montpelier), Siobhan Perricone (Orange), Michael Birnbaum (Plainfield), Rama Schneider (Williamstown), Allen Gilbert (Worcester); **Alternates:** Tom Fisher (East Montpelier); **Other Officers:** Becca Schrader (Clerk and Treasurer); **Other Attendees:** Ken Jones (applicant to be new alternate from Montpelier), Jared Thomas (public from Calais), ORCA camera person

Absent: Robert Burley (Elmore), John Quinn (Northfield), Jon Guiffre (Roxbury),

Meeting call to order:

Meeting was called to order by Jeremy Hansen at 6:01 PM and quorum was determined.

Additions or changes to the agenda:

There were no additions or changes to the agenda.

Public comment:

There was no public comment.

Hearing and feedback regarding the draft 2019 budget:

Several board members indicated that they had met with their selectboards or sent information

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to their selectboards/city councils, or met with the town manager. No towns have submitted feedback regarding the 2019 budget. Gilbert (Worcester) noted that just because we are not getting feedback specifically on the budget, we should not assume that people are not still eager for services. Suggestions included preparing a separate report to submit for annual town reports and hosting conversations at town meeting day. Front Porch Forum was also mentioned as a good way to get information out to the public. Schneider noted that the Finance Committee did not make any material changes to the budget.

Treasurer's Report: Becca Schrader, Treasurer

Schrader reported that CVI now has checking and savings accounts at Vermont State Employees Credit Union (VSECU). The checking account balance is \$200 and the savings account balance is \$25. All revenue has been by donation. There has been one expense of \$20 for trade name reservation and that was donated as well.

Contesting the CVI trade name

Hansen noted that Schneider had sent an inquiry to the Secretary of State's office challenging Stephen Whitaker's registration of the trade name "Central Vermont Internet" on the grounds that it is confusing because that was the publicly warned name of the Communications Union District for the ballot item on Town Meeting day. Schneider clarified that he had done this on his own as an individual. Hansen said that, based on information from the Secretary of State's office, if CVI wanted action to continue it would have to come from the board. Discussion followed to determine whether the board wanted to have Schneider continue to follow up on the issue on behalf of CVI.

ACTION: Motion by Jones, second by Barlow to authorize Schneider to continue to pursue the complaint with the Secretary of State's office on the CVI Governing Board's behalf. Vote was unanimous and motion carried.

Introductions

It was noted that there were some attendees at the meeting that had not been there before, so the group went around the room and did introductions. Ken Jones has applied to be the new alternate from Montpelier, but has not been confirmed yet. He works with the Agency of Commerce and Community Development in telecommunications.

Finance Committee Report: Schneider, Finance Committee Chair

Schneider gave a brief report on the Finance Committee meeting, including updates on opening of checking and savings accounts at Vermont State Employees Credit Union, policy and procedure work, audit and reporting, and future need for a business manager. Gilbert (Cabot) suggested that we should carefully weigh real revenue projections before taking on debt. Bent noted that ECFiber created an LLC to be the borrowing entity for its promissory notes.

Bylaw and Policy Committee: Barlow, B&P Committee Chair

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Barlow presented the draft of the Policy on Data and Business Information Acquisition and Retention. The draft policy acknowledges that Central Vermont Internet is a public agency and as such is subject to the Vermont Public Records Act, which addresses “any written or recorded information...which is produced or acquired.” It was also noted that there are several exceptions allowed. Bent asked whether this would include public disclosure of donations. Yes, but anonymous donations are allowed. Hansen suggested that there may be a role for CVI to participate in advocacy to strengthen the legislation for Communications Union Districts since they are competing for business, unlike municipalities. Schneider also noted a desire to protect the Clerk legally.

ACTION: Motion from Schneider, second by Bent to adopt the draft policy as written. Vote was unanimous, motion passed and delegates signed the policy.

Business Development Committee Report:

In the absence of Diamantides, committee chair, Hansen gave a report on the BDC Committee meeting. The topic of fundraising was raised, particularly the statement in the meeting materials around asking board members to donate \$250 to CVI and raise an additional \$500 from others. Perricone suggested a change to the language to remove a specific donation amount, as we want the board to be inclusive. Suggestions included:

“Board members are expected to make an annual financial contribution that would be considered generous for them.”

“Board members will give annually at a level that is meaningful to them.”

There was general consensus that either of these would be acceptable. Gilbert (Worcester) noted that CVI is different from a non-profit organization and cautioned against requiring members of a public body to make donations. Bent noted that the intention of this was to suggest, but not to codify or make policy.

Bent has created a website, cvfiber.net that is now online. Hansen gave an update from Guiffre that there is still a volunteer that may be able to provide free webhosting services starting early next year. Gilbert (Cabot) mentioned that this could be incorporated into a capital campaign. The possibility of in kind donations was also discussed. Grant funding was also discussed. Hansen also mentioned ACCD connectivity grants, which define underserved as less than 4 down/1 up. Barlow mentioned the Think VT Innovation grants.

ACTION: Motion by Hansen, second by Jones for Hansen and Perricone to work on the application for this grant, which has a deadline of December 7. Vote was unanimous, motion carried.

Preferred Development Route/Pilot Projects

This discussion was in reference to meeting packet pages 11-12 around setting criteria and priorities for where to start providing service. Klein stated that to gain maximum subscribers will require an established track record. Some members raised concerns that the prioritization

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be aligned with our mission, rather than corporate-related goals. Hansen mentioned that he had met with ValleyNet to gather information about their business model and their work with ECFiber. Need for fundraising was brought up again and it was mentioned that Washington Electric Co-op also has Community Based Grants. Other concerns included prioritizing a foundation of a strong, well-functioning organization. Discussion included the desirability of starting to look for a consultant that could advise on beginning planning, and Gilbert (Worcester) brought up Christine Hallquist's name as someone we could speak to, since she has worked on telecommunications planning and could potentially speak to how that would apply to us. Birnbaum noted that we need to be clear about our expectations for conversations with people. Bent will approach Hallquist's campaign manager to arrange. Hansen noted that everyone should consider it an assignment to approach anyone that could potentially advise us.

Vermont Telecommunications Plan Discussion:

For reasons of time, this item was moved to the back burner list.

Review of Backburner Items/Committee Assignments:

ACTION: Motion from Hansen, second from Jarvis to remove Whitaker's appointment to all CVFiber Committees. Some reservations were raised during discussion. There were 3 abstentions, all other votes yes, motion carried.

Barlow suggested that the Bylaw and Policy Committee could use at least one more member and it was decided that could be discussed at the next board meeting.

On the issue of net neutrality, Jones noted that there was an opportunity for public comment to the FCC and the link was distributed to the board. Schneider suggested that outreach could be removed for the time being and there was general consensus around this.

Approval of October 9 Meeting Minutes:

ACTION: Motion from Schneider, second from Perricone to approve October 9 meeting minutes as submitted. Vote was unanimous, motion carried.

Roundtable:

Birnbaum noted that on the chart prepared by Healy, take rate estimates should be different among the different towns. Hansen asked for volunteers that would like to join him for meetings with ISPs. Perricone noted that Orange is looking for an alternate. Several people mentioned motivation to get started doing things and delegating more tasks to committees. Gilbert (Worcester) mentioned the strong connection between what we're doing and larger issues confronting rural America.

Adjourn:

ACTION: Motion from Hansen, second from Barlow to adjourn. Vote was unanimous, and meeting was adjourned at 8:25pm.

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Next Meeting: December 13th at 6 PM at Berlin Elementary

Back burner

- Net neutrality
- Relationship to Vermont Telecommunications Plan

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