



CV FIBER GOVERNING BOARD MEETING MINUTES

Berlin Elementary School
372 Paine Turnpike N, Berlin, VT
March 10, 2020

Attendees

Board Attendees: Phil Hyjek (Middlesex), John Russell (Worcester), Ken Jones (Montpelier), Allen Gilbert (Worcester Alt), Tom Fisher (East Montpelier), Michael Birnbaum (Plainfield), Greg Kelly (Barre), Andrew Gilbert (Cabot), Jeremy Matt (Plainfield, alt), Bob Burley (Elmore), David Healy (Calais), Siobhan Perricone (Orange), Chuck Burt (Moretown), Jeremy Hansen (by phone), Jonathan Williams (by phone)

Public: Rob Fish (PSD), Steve Noltan (WEC Board), ORCA

Meeting called to order by Phil at 6:10

Agenda addition

Jeremy H. added need to discuss the Clerk position

Public Comment

Steve Noltan - serves on board of WEC.

- Update that they submitted proposal for broadband innovation grant (the version for electric utilities only).

- WEC has felt compelled to strongly consider the role electric utilities play for broadband, particularly in response to the Feasibility study report by PSD (as found on their website). Costs and risk is significant, they acknowledge they are going to have to be innovative, creative, collaborative—particularly with CUDs.
- Question by Jeremy M. to Rob: Where exactly is report found? Rob: On PSD website, look for "[PSD Releases Feasibility Study of Electric Companies Offering Broadband in Vermont](<https://publicservice.vermont.gov/announcements/psd-releases-feasibility-study-electric-companies-offering-broadband-vermont>)"
- Comment by Michael: Report by Magellan may be high-end price-wise. Steve acknowledged this is likely the case as well.
- Question by Siobhan: When earlier pressed on this topic, there was disagreement about going after this, does going after this grant represent board's approval in support of fiber? Steve: Rather than dissension, there is a lack of clarity. They want to do feasibility study, but beyond is TBD.

Treasurer's Report

Jeremy H. reported on Nathan's behalf.

- No major changes to bank account status
- Innovation grant checks did not get deposited, so Jeremy is trying to get them reissued.
- Motion by Jeremy H.: Shall the board approve paying attorney bill for \$420? Siobhan seconded. Unanimously passed.
- Michael asked why we need to approve a check when we had already approved the amount to pay them in advance. Phil pointed out that it's public process until such time as warrants(?) become normal process. Bob pointed out that in many public bodies, when it's a previous-approved budgeted amount, allow spending up to and including that amount. Only if it's a new individual expense, then it requires approval for both. Siobhan pointed out that finance committee brought policy forward for vote to allow exec committee to spend up to some amount (exact amount needs looking up) to spend without approval and that the board approved this policy.

Rob Fish - Rural Broadband Technical Assistance

Rob introduced himself and role.

- Indicated this is a new role and as we have a head start, he's here to learn from us as well.
- Will help with process and answering questions—but won't write grant.
- Question by Ken Jones: How do we get easy access to data? Question is not readily answerable just yet. There are many new reports now available on the website, e.g., underlying data for broadband availability maps.

- Comment by Bob: Critical to have checks for data accuracy, e.g., broadband availability maps—doing so will also make the data submitted by 3rd parties more reliable as the bar will be higher if they know they will be cross-checked ("trust, but validate"). Rob: Data accuracy is certainly improved this year, but it's still not perfect.
- New wireless drive tests data available next few weeks.

Communications Committee

Review of Gift/Loan Outreach campaign and membership need.

- Chuck verbally reviewed campaign proposal for Gift/Loan Outreach Campaign.
- Chuck called out the need for a new member. Tom pointed out that alternates and other public could be on the committee too. Andy has some community members in mind, but would like help soliciting them. Chuck agreed to write up blurb requesting membership for delegates to share.
- **Motion** Chuck made motion: Shall the board approve the Communications Committee to spend up to \$1,500 to begin advertising in support of the Gift & Loan Outreach Campaign? - Siobhan seconded.
 - Question by John R.: Wanted further explanation of what the areas of spend would be. Chuck mentioned Google Search, Social Networks, and Google Display Network. May consider some print opportunities and other local outlets, depending on pricing. Siobhan pointed out FPF is a big opportunity.
 - Comment by Ken: Also doesn't love lack of detail, but feels it's important that committees are able to do what they need to do to move things forward without being micro-managed by the larger board.
 - Comment by Andy: Suggested we look into Google Ads credit for non-profits. It was noted that for other Google products, they require 501(c)(3) status so we don't qualify, but Chuck agreed to investigate further.
 - Motion by Bob: - Would like to see more specificity in: 1. Areas to explore before spending; 2. Plan for performance measurement. Made Motion to amend accordingly. Motion failed for lack of second.
 - Phil called to question. Motion passed unanimously.
- Chuck passed around sign up sheet garnering volunteers to help with working on campaign.

BDC

Status update of Feasibility study.

- David provided updates on Interisle progress.

- David encouraged board to review list of criteria. Michael called out the importance to review and agree. Discussion about whether we should have 3 year business plan + 5 year business plan. Question asked to Rob Fish, he will research and come back. Bob: critical tools in evaluating business is Cumulative Cash Flow Curves and we should be prepared to forecast this.
- Ken reiterated need for a concrete set of action items (that is already started) once we receive the business plan. Turn around will need to happen quickly.
- David reviewed the survey information packet created by he and Ray. David indicated he would be willing to create the same data tables for every community as long as the delegate makes plan for updating the editorialized/summary content surrounding the data. Tom pointed out we should we have a call out to community members on how they can contribute. David and Chuck agreed and will make updates.
- Siobhan just received 20 more surveys, should she enter them? Unclear resolution of the question, but we should at least make sure to include interested parties in communications.
- Michael updated on touring: 2 days, 10 towns, 6 VELCO/WEC substations. Very productive exploration of the communities in question.

Opportunity with CVEDC & NBRC

Jeremy updated on NBRC that CVEDC might be willing to help us on the opportunity including willing to help write the grant.

Motion by John R.: Shall the board approve Jeremy H. to write a letter to CVEDC to formally request their help? Seconded by Chuck. Passed unanimously.

Clerk

Susan stepped down as both delegate and clerk so we need to find a new clerk.

- There is a budget line item for reimbursing the clerk.
- Comment by Ken: We are going to need a director/manager soon too. Michael reiterated the need for a manager, but need to have a budget before we can actually hire someone which requires having more funding first.
- Question by Jeremy H.: Can advertise our need by piggy backing off of our Gift/Loan Campaigns. Chuck indicated this is certainly possible and the Comm's Committee will make plans for it.
- Question by Rob Fish: What about AmeriCorps volunteer? Multiple board members commented that it was declined because of requirements around oversight, project details, and project funding status.
- Motion by Michael: Shall the board approve the Communications Committee to advertise the clerk position in the same manner as last time. John R. seconded.

- Motion to Amend by John R.: Amendment to advertise in Times Argus and VTDigger (and he will fund it). Tom seconded. Amendment Passed unanimously.
- New Motion text: Shall the board approve the Communications Committee to advertise the clerk position in the same manner as last time as well as in the Times Argus and VTDigger? Passed unanimously.

Ongoing discussion about 2020 timeline

- Jeremy H. mentioned we're probably not quite ready to hold this discussion.
- Ken pointed out by next meeting we should have a clearer picture. "It's mushy now." Feasibility study will be available in 3 weeks. Materials will be available prior to the next meeting for review for expected actions coming out of feasibility study, all board members should be prepared to review and come ready to make decisions.

Key Round-table Points

- We need to better support joining governance meetings remotely, particularly in light of current health conditions
- Key takeaway for PSD is to figure out if we can get more clarity around the 3 year plan requirement, while keeping them loose so they can be realistically be met
- Current virus scares with schools/universities closing means rural, access challenged folks are at a real disadvantage educationally
- Shift of consumer focus toward mobile access means we have an opportunity to go after provide fiber support to towers

Adjourned at 7:42