



## CVFiber Policy Committee Meeting Minutes DRAFT

**Virtual meeting via gotomeeting.com  
Thursday, May 27, 2021 5 p.m.**

Present: Committee members Phil Cecchini (Barre Town, alt. del.), Allen Gilbert (Worcester), John Morris (Marshfield), Ray Pelletier (Northfield), and Siobhan Perricone (Orange); and Alexis Julian, guest.

The meeting was called to order at 5:02 p.m. by Gilbert. He welcomed Julian, who has expressed interest in volunteering to join the Policy Committee as a public member.

Gilbert noted that the first order of business was election of a chair and vice-chair. He asked Pelletier to temporarily assume the chair and conduct the election. Pelletier did so, and nominated Gilbert for chair; Perricone seconded the motion. Pelletier asked if there were other nominations. Seeing none, he asked a single vote be cast for Gilbert for chair. This was done, and Gilbert assumed the chair position and continued the meeting. Gilbert asked for nominations for vice-chair. There were none. He suggested rather than draft someone at this meeting, we table the vice-chair election to see if anyone may step forward by the next meeting to be a nominee. Hearing no objection, the election was tabled.

**Changes to the agenda.** There were none.

**Public comment.** There was none.

**Approval of minutes.** The draft minutes of the April 22, 2021 Policy Committee meeting were approved unanimously.

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**Procedure for conducting paper-ballot votes on electronic meeting platforms.** Gilbert explained that this item was on the agenda because he had received a question about the voting procedure that was used for choosing a vice chair at the May 11 virtual Governing Board meeting. The situation was that two candidates were nominated for vice chair. Board members wanted their votes to be private, so an e-equivalent to a paper-ballot vote (which would be used in such circumstance at an in-person meeting) was needed. It was agreed that each board member would use the message function on the Go To Meeting platform to send to the chair the name of the person they wanted to vote for. While a pretty good idea, it wasn't perfect. Knowledge of who was voting for whom was kept secret for nearly everyone, except the chair -- he was "collecting" the e-votes and could therefore see who was voting for whom. The question raised by the person who contacted Gilbert was this lack of privacy. Gilbert said he told the person he'd think about what happened, do some research on voting procedures, and bring the issue to the Policy Committee.

Gilbert said he reviewed CVFiber's Rules of Procedure and state statutes and found that the board had actually erred in voting the way it did. Paragraph 5 in Section E. of the Rules, "Discussion, Motions, and Voting," states that "When one or more delegates, or alternates serving in the absence of a delegate, attend a meeting electronically, a roll call vote is required for votes that are not unanimous." Since the election for vice chair was contested and therefore not unanimous, a roll call vote was required. This procedure is based on state law, Gilbert said. 1 VSA 12 (a) (2) (B) requires that at virtual meetings, "any vote of the public body that is not unanimous shall be taken by roll call." Further, 1 VSA 12 (b) (1) (D) requires that minutes of the meeting include "the results of any votes, with a record of the individual vote of each member if a roll call is taken." Gilbert said that these requirements ultimately flow from Article 6 of Chapter 1 of the Vermont Constitution, which says that all public officials are servants of the people and are accountable to them. So, Gilbert summed up, the complaint that the board's e-version of a paper-ballot violated board members' privacy wasn't justified. In fact, CVFiber board members' votes on any issues that are not unanimous but contested must be recorded in the meeting minutes.

Perricone said she agreed with Gilbert's explanation, as did the other members. Pelletier asked, "What do we do next?" Gilbert felt we should report our findings to the Governing Board and let board members decide how they wish to proceed. That approach was endorsed as a reasonable plan.

**Continue discussion of broadband equal access issues.** This item followed on the committee's discussion at its last meeting about principles that should guide CVFiber's work, especially around equity. Gilbert noted that Pelletier had brought up the issue at a Finance Committee meeting earlier in the week; there seemed a common interest to focus on how CVFiber goes about equity, particularly not only

how to make high-speed internet available to everyone, but also how to ensure that access is affordable for all and that users have the equipment and knowledge they need to connect to the internet and take advantage of the range of opportunities available online. Pelletier said FX Flynn of ECFiber feels there should be a group or agency of some sort that qualifies people as eligible for assistance in paying connection and subscription fees. ECFiber has already set up a separate entity, called Equal Access to Broadband, to provide assistance to ECFiber customers who need help. Pelletier suggested we need to develop a problem statement, and then explore possible solutions, digging into numbers and costs and investigating where funds could be found to underwrite initiatives. Gilbert had suggested at the Finance Committee that this topic was more than a money issue, and that other committees should also be discussing equity challenges – hence this further discussion at the Policy Committee meeting. We may want to set up a study group to explore issues and report back to the board. Pelletier suggested that perhaps at our next committee meetings, we could invite FX Flynn and Holly Groschner, who heads ECFiber’s Equal Access to Broadband initiative, to join us and speak a bit about what they’re doing and if they see possibilities for CUDs to work together on equity issues. We know some programs are already addressing some of these needs – Gilbert mentioned the FCC’s new Emergency Broadband Benefit, and Cecchini mentioned assistance provide through local CAP (Community Action Program) agencies, such as Capstone Community Action in Barre, where he works.

**Other business.** Gilbert apologized for neglecting earlier to bring up establishing a regular meeting time. He proposed that we stick with the fourth Thursday of the month at 5 p.m. There were no objections, and the proposal was accepted. The committee’s next meeting will be Thursday, June 24 at 5 p.m.

The meeting adjourned at 5:50 p.m.

*-- Allen Gilbert*