



CVFiber Policy Committee Meeting Minutes DRAFT

In-person meeting, Worcester Town Hall
Virtual meeting via gotomeeting.com
Thursday, June 24, 2021 5 p.m.

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

The meeting was called to order at 5 p.m. by Gilbert, chair.

Changes to the agenda. There were none.

Public comment. There was none.

Approval of minutes. The draft minutes of the May 27, 2021 Policy Committee meeting were approved unanimously, with a small correction for a verb in the wrong tense.

Issue of whether a committee vice-chair can take the committee chair's position on the Executive Committee in the chair's absence. Gilbert outlined the issue. Members of the Executive Committee are delineated in the CVFiber Rules of Procedure: they are the organization's officers (except for the treasurer) and committee chairs. All must be Governing Board members. This seems to exclude alternate board delegates, and community members serving on committees, from serving on the Executive Committee. Hence, it seems that a vice chair of a committee – who may be an alternate board delegate or a community member –

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cannot represent a certain committee on the Executive Committee in the absence of the committee chair. Gilbert then explained that there is, however, a sentence in Section A., Purpose and Authority, of the Rules of Procedure that states, “Delegates and alternates are collectively referred to herein as Governing Board members.” He asked if this suggested that alternates serving as a committee’s vice chair could essential be considered a board member and therefore be able to serve temporarily on the Executive Committee if the committee chair were unable to attend an Executive Committee meeting.

Discussion ensued. Pelletier felt an alternate could attend an Executive Committee meeting and participate in discussion, but could not vote. Perricone pointed out that not allowing participation as a full member might, in certain circumstances, lead to lack of a quorum (the Executive Committee has seven members). Cecchini said he agreed with Pelletier that the input of an alternate at an Executive Committee meeting could be valuable but voting requires a higher level of involvement in the organization; a casual attendee may not have the necessary experience and knowledge needed to make decisions for the organization.

Gilbert noted that the circumstances that led to the raising of this question concerned a community member who served as a committee vice-chair. He said the Rules of Procedure, in the most favorable interpretation that delegates and alternates are “collectively referred to herein as Governing Board members,” could be read as allowing alternates to serve temporarily in a committee chair’s stead on the Executive Committee when the chair can’t attend. But the rules clearly do not allow anyone other than board members (and possibly alternates) from serving on the Executive Committee. The immediate question, therefore of whether a community member can serve as a temporary Executive Committee member has a clear answer: no. Committee members agreed.

The related question of whether an alternate (rather than just board delegates) can serve on the Executive Committee, Gilbert pointed out, really isn’t “ripe” for deciding at this point because such a situation hasn’t arisen.

Pelletier suggested this issue be forwarded to the Executive Committee for guidance. He offered a statement of responsibilities that we could recommend for that committee’s review and possible referral to the Governing Board for any further discussion. Committee members were in unanimous agreement with Pelletier’s suggestion. The language of his proposal is:

CVFiber Vice Chair Responsibilities

Committee vice chairs are selected by the committee from the membership of the committee.

The VC is responsible for facilitating the committee meeting, as needed, but has no additional authority.

Any member of the committee can serve as the VC, including delegates, alternates and board-appointed community members.

In the absence of the committee chair, the VC may attend Executive Committee meetings and provide input to inform Executive Committee decisions, but cannot vote.

Gilbert said he would forward this to the Executive Committee.

Continue discussion of broadband equal access issues. This item followed on the committee's previous discussions about principles that should guide CVFiber's work, especially around equity. Holly Groschner, who heads ECFiber's Equal Access to Broadband initiative, had been invited to join our meeting to discuss the EAB's work and whether there might be possibilities for CUDs to work together on equity issues. Groschner described her background as a telecommunications lawyer for 30 years and then as head of Vermont PBS. She said her interest in equal access issues lay in the fact that broadband equity isn't just about finding the money to build broadband throughout the state; it's also about finding a "trusted partner" (such as social service providers) to work on the community level to help residents get connected at a price they can afford, and to know how to take advantage of the opportunities that high-speed internet provides. She said the U.S. has no affordable broadband strategy; current assistance programs are temporary and inadequate, especially for low-income residents. She is interested in hearing any feedback from us, and other CUDs, on equity issues. EAB will be launching a trial program this summer, she said, working largely with local community service agencies, to provide ongoing support for mainly low-income residents. Groschner suggested VCUDA might be a good place to raise equity issues and see how CUDs could work together on joint solutions. EAB's trial program could, by summer's end, provide information on how best to move forward.

Inquiry re: possible policy on who should be provided MS Teams desktop client. Gilbert suggested that the Policy Committee lacked the technical understanding of Microsoft Teams desktop client apps to decide who should be provided with the application and who should not. The committee agreed this issue is an administrative one that would best be addressed by the Executive Committee or the Communications Committee. Gilbert will inform those committees of our recommendation.

Vice chair vacancy. No volunteers stepped forward to fill this post.

Other business

- Gilbert asked Pelletier, who chairs the Finance Committee, for guidance on responding to his request that committees provide him with estimates of funds they might need next year as the Finance Committee prepares the 2022 CVFiber budget. Pelletier recommended that the Policy Committee consider possible legal services it might need and provide an estimate of money necessary to cover such expenses.
- There will be no Policy Committee meeting in July, Gilbert said; he'll be away on vacation. If another committee member would like to organize a July meeting, he said we could appoint that person a temporary vice-chair so s/he could pull a meeting together. Members' silence affirmed there will be no July meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 6 p.m.

-- *Allen Gilbert*

DRAFT