



**CVFiber Policy Committee Meeting Minutes  
DRAFT**

**In-person meeting, Worcester Town Hall  
Virtual meeting via MS Teams  
Thursday, Sept. 30, 2021 5 p.m.**

**Present:** Committee members Allen Gilbert (Worcester), Linda Gravell (Waterbury), John Morris (Marshfield), Ray Pelletier (Northfield), and Siobhan Perricone (Orange); and John Zimmerman (guest).

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 June 24, 2021 Policy Committee meeting were approved unanimously.

**Continue discussion of broadband equity issues.** Gilbert started the discussion by saying he believes we need to develop an understanding of what a concept of broadband equity and opportunity means, what it includes, and whether the individual CUDs, VCUDA (the Vermont Communications Union Districts Association), or the VCBB (the Vermont Community Broadband Board) should be leading the effort. The topic of broadband equity and opportunity seems to be getting traction on the state level, he said, as indicated by the interest the VCBB members have expressed about the subject. Holly Groschner (who had spoken with the Policy Committee by phone during our June meeting and is now on the VCBB board) gave a presentation on equity issues at a September VCBB meeting. Gilbert had distributed a copy of the presentation to committee members. He noted that the presentation doesn't just focus on the issues of access and affordability, but also on

adaptability -- are people able to utilize the tools and opportunities that high-speed internet offers?

Perricone remarked that she hadn't thought of the barrier of adaptability, but having skills to be able to use programs that become accessible and usable through a high-speed connection is obviously important.

Gravell said she would like to see an income-based subscription system. Everyone should be able to access high-speed internet, especially if they have kids, she said.

Pelletier said CVFiber is shooting to be able to offer a 100/100 (megabits per second, up and down) for a monthly charge of \$50. We want to keep the cost as low as possible.

Conversation turned to subsidies for low-income individuals or families who might find monthly charges hard to pay. Gilbert said Groschner pointed out in her presentation that many subsidy programs are available, but there's no central place that covers all of them. Many programs remain unknown to those who could benefit from them. Perricone said it's clear that affordability is an issue across the state, and that the issue requires a statewide solution. She felt that if the federal government is involved, it should only be to award stipends. There was a consensus among the committee that CUDs should not have to establish and manage subsidy programs. Means-based qualification would be very difficult for us to calculate.

Pelletier wondered if American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds could perhaps be used for one-time expenses, like the cost of the fiber connection to the home, or the modem a family might need.

Allen brought up the issue of extra costs if someone lives far from the nearest utility pole, or perhaps even lives off the grid. Pelletier said there's been discussion of perhaps setting a distance to which CVFiber will cover the cost of providing a connection, with a surcharge the customer must pay if the line goes beyond that distance. Nothing has been determined, however.

The discussion wound down, partly because of, ironically, internet connectivity problems. All agreed the discussion had been interesting and that the issue of digital equity is important to CVFiber's work. Perricone said she was glad that "We're baking the issue of equity into our systems" so we can narrow the divide that keeps some people from being able to access high-speed internet. Gravell said she has a strong interest in equity issues generally and is glad we're talking about equity in relation to high-speed internet accessibility and use.

Gilbert asked that if anyone comes across descriptions of internet subsidy programs that are currently available, please send him details. We should start gathering

what we know of assistance plans already in place. Gravelle said that she would contact her local state representative, Rep. Theresa Wood, to see what information she might have available. Wood is also interested in equity issues, Gravelle said.

**Vice chair vacancy.** No volunteers stepped forward to fill the post. Gilbert said we'll continue to try to fill the position.

**Other business.** None

**Adjourn.** The meeting adjourned at 5:50 p.m.

*-- Allen Gilbert*