



CVFIBER EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

Virtually on MS Teams

May 16, 2023

Minutes Short Summary

The Executive Committee continued the discussion of how to fulfill CVFiber's mission of digital equity in coordination with all Vermont CUDs. The Executive Committee unanimously passed a motion to recommend that the Executive Director provide a plan and schedule for completing Human Relations policies to send to the full Board. The Community Relations Manager detailed steps being taken to market CVFiber, as well as the formation of a task force to handle the emailed questions coming in from the public. The Operations Manager reported on current efforts to get more crews in the field to expedite work. Jennille Smith, Lucas Stubbs, and Maggie Tuck-Sauer had a productive all day meeting with partners to see how best to move forward. The Executive Committee unanimously approved the motion to recommend to the Governing Board that the executive director, the community relations manager, and the operations manager be included along with the Governing Board Chair as the spokespersons for CVFiber. Jerry Diamantides highlighted that all CVFiber committees will be developing budgets for their meetings. The informational CVFiber webinar was moved from June 7 to June 14, 2023. The minutes for the April 4 and 18, 2023 meetings were approved.

Present:

Executive Committee Delegates: Jerry Diamantides (Berlin), Siobhan Perricone (Orange), David Healey (Calais), Chuck Burt (Moretown), Allen Gilbert (Worcester), Jeremy Matt (Plainfield)

Absent: Ray Pelletier (Northfield)

Others Present: Jennille Smith (Executive Director), Linda Gravell (Waterbury), David Lawrence (Middlesex), Laurie Beth Putnam (Treasurer), Lucas Stubbs (Operations Manager), and Maggie Tuck-Sauer (Community Relations Manager)

Call to order: Jerry Diamantides called the meeting to order at 5:01pm.

Additions to the agenda:

- None

Public comment

- None

Digital Equity Policy Discussion

- Discussion: Allen Gilbert noted that the Policy Committee has assumed that all CVFiber Board members and employees are committed to digital equity. The question is how will this be funded and executed. We want our efforts to be in cooperation with the other CUDs as digital equity is a cooperative venture.
- Jerry Diamantides asked if VCBB has a person responsible for promoting digital equity. Jennille Smith said VCBB is required to do this as part of their BEAD funding. They have contracted with the Vernonberg Group regarding the financial gap and are also working to address the knowledge gap.
- Linda Gravell reported that the Policy Committee worked on a statement which, if approved, will be posted on the website: “CVFiber’s mandate as a Communications Union District is to provide access to high speed internet for the people in our district”. Gravell also stated that she believes the Vermont Communication Union District Association (VCUDA), should work on a statewide equal access to broadband (EAB) plan with CVFiber and other CUDs lending support through funds from our subscription revenue. The CVFiber Executive Committee should encourage VCUDA to develop statewide solutions and funding for the EAB effort established by ECFiber. The funding should come from all CUDs and the Vermont legislature.
- Siobhan Perricone noted another issue is whether people actually have the ability to buy devices to use the Internet.
- Jerry Diamantides proposed recommending the statement to the Governing Board for approval, then put it on our website, and follow up with our actions.
- Jennille Smith reported that Maggie Tuck-Sauer listed potential examples of CVFiber working towards Digital Equity: if a subscriber has a long drop, Waitsfield has a payment plan. We can implement a neighbor helping neighbor fund. We have ARPA funds. Equal Access to Broadband has a grant for devices for people who need to use on-line medicine. We have started thinking about how CVFiber can make this affordable.
- Maggie Tuck-Sauer said working towards Digital Equity is an opportunity to position CVFiber in the community. We could have device drives; people can donate used equipment. We can have learning workshops, which will teach people how to tap the potential of the Internet also help people learn about CVFiber; we are not a cable company, but here as neighbors to provide a community service.
- **MOTION** (Jerry Diamantides, second Jeremy Matt)
It is moved that the Executive Committee recommend the policy statement to the Governing Board for approval to place on our website and for subsequent action.

Passed unanimously.

Human Relations Policy Discussion

- Discussion: Allen Gilbert reported that the Policy Committee believes CVFiber need to transition to being an employee organization. He said as CVFiber moves from a volunteer led organization to having employees who depend on us for their livelihood there is an increasing need for formal HR policies, guidelines and rules, salary scales, evaluations, benefits, etc. He suggested that CVFiber should consider hiring a

professional human relations contractor to help us develop these and recommended that this be brought to the Governing Board.

- David Healy said that we have joined the Vermont League of Cities and Towns, and they do have HR resources we can take advantage of. Jennille Smith added that we have also talked to VCUDA to see what the other CUDs are doing.
- Allen Gilbert pointed out the advantages of having a common Human Resources policy across all the CUDs.
- Jennille Smith said HR policy is a critical piece so she thinks we should have a motion, a deadline, and formally adopt the policies.
- Allen Gilbert asked if what exists already a good fit for us, and Jennille Smith said that within a couple of months we should be able to tailor it to what we need.
- Linda Gravell suggested that the research be on the shared drive. Jennille Smith said she would create a folder for HR policies to review.
- **MOTION** (David Healy, second Jeremy Matt)
Whereas CVFiber has grown in size with employees;

Whereas the Executive Committee recognizes the need for developing human resources,

It is moved that the executive committee recommends that the Executive Director provide a plan and schedule for completing such to the full Board.

Passed unanimously.

Marketing Update and Outlook

- Discussion: Maggie Tuck-Sauer said we are heavily involved in website development, with a lot of credit to Linda Gravell for getting out the bugs. Chuck Burt and Linda Gravell are close to going live and they are testing on the friendlies. She has asked for bid from a local printing company for a much less expensive postcard-sized substitute for a brochure for our field workers to pass out. These could also be passed out at events. We are printing business cards and postcard mailers. The vendor will do the mailing for us. T-shirts being made, so let Maggie Tuck-Sauer know your size. She will also be ordering automobile and refrigerator magnets with our contact information.
- Maggie Tuck-Sauer reported that she has formed a task force to handle via email questions from the public, and she would like this committee's approval. This team is working on creating a database of canned responses to FAQs, as well as an on-call roster to answer questions on a weekly basis so this task is shared. If a specialized answer is needed, the question can be forwarded to the appropriate person. We would like a 24-hour response time. Basically we are being asked when, where and how much. Maggie Tuck-Sauer would like to provide training to all of the delegates so they can answer questions.
- Jerry Diamantides noted this plan is an expense and asked Maggie if she could provide a budget to ensure these expenses are covered. Maggie Tuck-Sauer said she would present this to the Communications Committee and then to the Executive Committee, noting that she has gone through the proposed budget presented by Crawford, but she is coming in at 75% less than their proposal. She is relying on this existing budget already set up for 2023.

- Jerry Diamantides asked for the members of the task force: Chuck Burt, David Healy, Jennille Smith, Lucas Stubbs, Bruce Stevenson, and John Walters; this is Maggie Tuck-Sauer's dream team with the expertise to handle the questions coming in.
- Jeremy Matt asked if there would be a process to make sure the answers to the FAQs are updated appropriately. Maggie Tuck-Sauer agreed that the answers will need to be updated, but she does not want the task force to have to meet constantly. This is not a formal committee. We do, however, want a CVFiber branded script.

Construction Update and Outlook

- Discussion: Lucas Stubbs reported that last week no new fiber was put up, but this week should be better. We are looking at other avenues to get more crews in the field. He spoke with First Light out of Albany, NY, and Layer Eight, and Jennille spoke with Future. These teams could work in the Marshfield area. We are also still working with Eustis and NRTC to see if they can provide more crews, and we made it clear how expectations are not yet being met.
- Jerry Diamantides said all these companies have already been vetted.
- Jeremy Matt asked if we have a sense if we are over/under budget for where we are now. Jennille Smith has asked for reassessments for all of these bidders, current and potential. We know the market has changed, and our costs are going to increase. We are focusing on the first three DAs as a result.
- Jerry Diamantides noted we are carefully ensuring we don't spend more than we have on hand.
- Lucas Stubbs also reported that the OLT might be ready for the first district by early June.

Subscriptions/ISP Update and Outlook

- Discussion: Jennille Smith said we met with Waitsfield and other partners to finalize add-ons and other details. We have eight friendlies that will be signed up first to help us see how it will look from A to Z. Waitsfield will be taking on a lot of the roll-out. We met all day with Lucas Stubbs, Maggie Tuck-Sauer, Waitsfield, NRTC, Eustis and other partners to talk about our challenges, such as grant writing, marketing, and construction. It was a productive all day strategy meeting with all parties involved.

Spokesperson Authority

- Discussion: Jennille Smith noted that now CVFiber is much more in the public eye with staff, we realized that we are getting a lot of questions. We need to know who gets to speak on behalf of CVFiber so our message is clear, consistent and represents our brand.
- Chuck Burt noted that Section A paragraph 3 of the Governing Board states no one can speak on behalf of CVFiber unless the Governing Board has delegated that authority. A few months ago, we were just a board but now we are an operating company with employees. For example, Maggie Tuck-Sauer is going to have to make decisions every day on how to present CVFiber. We have a motion to delegate authority to speak on behalf of CVFiber. We are also asking Allen Gilbert to see if the Board rules need to be revised as well.
- Allen Gilbert said that the CUD statutes only define the authority of Board members. In February of 2022, we also granted Committees the right to act. All of this is only

relevant to the volunteers. When it comes to employees, Allen Gilbert thinks this is more a Human Relations issue, and how the employees want to bring these rules to the Board for approval.

- Chuck Burt said the motion he is putting forward is designed as a short-term stopgap. His motion gives authority to all three employees, but that we may want to keep authority with the Executive Director. Jerry Diamantides noted that Lucas Stubbs and Maggie Tuck-Sauer already report to Jennille Smith. Jennille Smith said she would like both Lucas and Maggie to have this authority, as we need to trust their voices.

- **MOTION** (Chuck Burt, Second Siobhan Perricone)

Whereas CVFiber is a public entity in a public facing role which often includes interviews or marketing of its campaigns, services, products, promotions, status and progress in providing world class Internet to Central Vermont,

Whereas CVFiber has a brand that it desires to communicate to its members and others in a consistent manner for transparency and clarity,

Whereas CVFiber has hired a full-time executive director, a full-time community relations manager, and a full-time operations manager, and has contracted with an operator for services,

It is hereby moved that the Executive Committee recommend to the Governing Board that the executive director, the community relations manager, and the operations manager be included along with the Governing Board Chair as the spokespersons for CVFiber, and that the named spokespersons be permitted to delegate communications authority to others for specific communications including customer service through CVFiber personnel or working group, or by our vendors including our operator, or by delegates to the Governing Board for communications with member towns.

Passed unanimously as amended to include “a full-time operations manager.”

Budget Development

- Discussion: Jerry Diamantides highlighted that June is budget development season so we will be developing budgets from our committees. Please be timely. Jennille Smith noted that all costs are increasing.

Webinar 07June23

- Discussion: Jerry Diamantides asked if this timing is workable.
- Jennille Smith noted that this is a balancing game. We have held back our Front Porch Forum posts. Lucas Stubbs said that we should give information but not timeframes. Jerry Diamantides noted that we do want people to go to the website to see the areas that will be lit.
- Jeremy Matt suggested we should be prepared for questions on services and how to connect.
- Maggie Tuck-Sauer said she would prefer the second or third week of June for the webinar. A lot of people, for example, don't know what a site survey is. We could go on

a field trip with one of the Waitsfield staff and video it, and that could be a great part of the webinar.

- The webinar is moved to June 14th.

Prior Meeting Minutes

- MOTION (Jeremy Matt, Second Chuck Burt)

It is moved to approve the minutes for the April 4 and 18, 2023 meetings as drafted with minor grammatical corrections.

Passed Unanimously.

Adjourn at 6:26pm

- **Motion to Adjourn:** Siobhan Perricone.

Respectfully submitted,
Jeremy Matt, Clerk