



CVFIBER OPERATIONS AND PLANNING COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

Virtually on MS Teams

June 12, 2023

Minutes Short Summary

Tom Fisher requested that the construction problems that the emerald ash borer will cause be added to agenda. The minutes for the May 8, 2023 Operations and Planning Committee meeting were approved. Lucas Stubbs gave a detailed update and reported that CVFiber has 26 miles of fiber, 34 of strand, and has passed 226 residences as of Wednesday, June 7th. Jennille Smith reported CVFiber is proceeding with inventory design for the backbone and with make ready as planned. Jennille Smith also reported that, in cooperation with WCVT and CrowdFiber, eight friendlies are testing both the sign up and billing capabilities of the website. Linda Gravell noted two current issues for the website: first, we need approval for prices which will happen at the Governing Board meeting tomorrow, and, second, a solution to handling the zones which will not yet be constructed (DNYC) before the website can go live. Linda Gravell, Lucas Stubbs and Maggie Tuck-Sauer will work on a flowchart to identify the process and responsibilities from construction to successful customer sign-on. Tom Fisher notified CVFiber that the emerald ash borer is already destroying ash trees in Vermont in our areas that our construction will need to take this danger into account. Ray Pelletier reported that in recognition of the grant gap, the Executive Committee has approved the engagement of NRTC and PFM to assist CVFiber with grant and loan applications in the fall (Q4) of 2023 to ensure construction goes forward in 2024.

Present:

Planning and Development Committee Delegates: Siobhan Perricone (Orange), Jeremy Matt (Plainfield), Linda Gravell (Waterbury), Ray Pelletier (Northfield), Christopher Shenk (Alternate, Waterbury), Henry Amistadi (Duxbury), Tom Fisher (East Montpelier)

Absent: David Healy (Calais)

Others Present: Jennille Smith (Executive Director), Lucas Stubbs (Operations Manager), and Maggie Tuck-Sauer (Community Relations Manager), Jerry Diamantides (Berlin)

Call to order: Linda Gravell called the meeting to order at 5:30pm.

Additions to the agenda:

- Tom Fisher requested that the potential construction problems that the Emerald Ash borer will cause be added to the agenda.

Public comment

- None.

Prior Meeting Minutes

- **MOTION** (Jeremy Matt, Second Siobhan Perricone)
To approve the 5/8/23 meeting minutes as drafted with friendly amendments.
Passed unanimously.

Updates/Discussion

- **Operations Manager Report:** Lucas Stubbs reported that we have put a couple of areas on hold but we have Roxbury almost complete, Moretown 03, Plainfield 01, and Washington 01 were submitted; all are pending CTC approval. Jennille Smith gave the following overview: we got approvals for all the CLs, all the RSs, and all the MAs. We also got approvals for MTO 1 and 2, Washington 02, and Plainfield 02 and 03. We also got initial designs for MT03 and Washington 01 and Plainfield 01; all of these are still under review. Duxbury has not been approved. The review ensures we are designing to meet our initial plans.
- **NRTC Design:** Jennille Smith reported that we are still proceeding with inventory design for the backbone. If we are close to completing, we are going to continue even if we may have delay construction.
- **Make Ready Progress:** Jennille Smith said make ready is proceeding as planned. We are in negotiation to be sure we are being treated fairly with all the utilities in the State. Another piece is to focus on the make ready where we know we are going to do construction first. There is no need for an executive session at this time. Jeremy Matt asked if pole inventory or estimates are delayed would the delay cause problems. Jennille Smith explained that passing time can cause changes, but we would true up at the point of moving from make ready to construction.
- **Construction Progress and Issues:** Lucas Stubbs reported that construction is near completion in CLO1 now. The OLT site is prepped, and we are waiting for the concrete vendor to pour the slab. We are moving along where Calais has been permitted, but we are on hold where we need permits. We have 26 miles of fiber, 34 of strand, and have passed 226 residences. We are now getting splicing ready with NRTC. Linda Gravell asked is we are moving into the next district and Lucas Stubbs said we still need some permits.
- **WCVT Operations Update:** Jennille Smith reported WTCV Waitsfield has completed six of our friendlies; for two more they are in the process of doing site visits. We are working with CrowdFiber to get the website up and running, which we will be testing with our friendlies both for sign up and billing.
- **CrowdFiber Website:** Linda Gravell reported two outstanding issues before the website can go live. The first is approval for prices, which will be handled at tomorrow's Governing Board meeting. The second is that the website is not yet able to handle individual address

which have been designated Do Not Construct areas (DNCs), which indicates that construction is held up, perhaps because of permitting issues, for example. David Healy put together the zones on CrowdFiber months ago, but this did not take DNCs into account. We have about 1,000 pre-subscriptions.

- Jeremy Matt said it seems that we need a backend to handle DNCs. Linda Gravell said CrowdFiber has not cooperated with this. Jerry Diamantides noted that DNCs tend to be very small and might be literally a dead end. He suggested they do not need to be itemized on the website because the issue could be handled instead when a customer calls to get a site survey.
- Tom Fisher asked how these areas are identified. Lucas Stubbs noted that various issues could cause an area to be designated a DNC. Some might come to fruition more quickly than others. Each will have its own timeframe.
- Christopher Shenk asked if we are not serving the difficult to serve? Jerry Diamantides noted that DNC issues vary from looking at extraordinary expenses to simply waiting for a permit. A better term might be “DNYC for Do Not Yet Construct. Christopher Shenk also thought that CrowdFiber had the ability to distinguish: 1) currently served areas 2) future to-be-served areas, and 3) unserved areas. Linda Gravell said there is no way to identify each by individual address. She will discuss this with CrowdFiber on Tuesday, June 13th.
- Jeremy Matt noted that customer service is key because anyone who sees neighbors being served while they are not will be upset. Could we change this to “construction paused”? Linda Gravell suggested that labeling is Maggie Tuck-Sauer’s job.
- Ray Pelletier noted we are designing to the point where we can construct.
- **Marketing Update:** Jennille Smith reported that we have had people come forward with requests, so we need to reach out to potential customers. So far, we are dealing with construction issues as they arise. We have material we have developed for our field workers to handout with QR codes. We are working on postcards to let potential customers know when service is coming to their area. Marketing materials will be shared with the Board and the committees. Siobhan Perricone said that electric companies are not addressed in this way, but Lucas Stubbs noted CVFiber crews are approached. Linda Gravell said that this is a marketing opportunity.
 - Jerry Diamantides said he would like to see a path from construction to notification and then a response to potential subscribers, perhaps a flow chart that shows what happens and who is responsible. Linda Gravell, Lucas Stubbs and Maggie Tuck-Sauer will work on this.
 - Tom Fisher said they might be an internal flow chart and a second external flow chart for how we get the information to the customer. Linda Gravell said she, Lucas and Maggie will be working on this.
- **Emerald Ash Borer:** Tom Fisher reported that the emerald ash borer is an insect that basically destroys ash trees in about two years. The insects can be mitigated on a tree-by-tree basis but it is expensive. A quarter to a third of the trees in his neighborhood will go down. Siobhan Perricone noted that some towns are preemptively taking trees down which are a threat to the roads, and this would also be removing trees that would cause trouble for CVFiber. Jennille Smith noted that getting these trees out improves make ready in cooperation with utilities. Jeremy Matt and Siobhan Perricone noted that for individual residences, the utility companies would take down problematic trees.

2023-2024 Project Funding Update

- Discussion: Ray Pelletier reported that in recognition of the grant gap, the Executive Committee has approved the engagement of NRTC and PFM to assist us with grant and loan applications in the fall (Q4), and we will be pursuing all options and millions of dollars to do meaningful construction in 2024 because we still don't know when BEAD will hit and how much CVFiber will receive.
- Jerry Diamantides thanked Linda Gravell for stepping in to help while David Healy is away.

Adjourned at 6:19pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Jeremy Matt, Clerk