



CVFiber Policy Committee Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, June 7, 2023 5:00 PM - 6:00 PM
Virtual meeting

Present: Allen Gilbert (Worcester), Linda Gravell (Waterbury), John Morris (Marshfield), and Siobhan Perricone (Orange); and Jennille Smith, executive director.

- 1. Call to order.** A quorum being present, the meeting was called to order at 5:02 p.m. by Gilbert, chair.
- 2. Changes to agenda.** There were none.
- 3. Public comment.** There was none.
- 4. Approval of April 5, 2023, and May 9, 2023 draft meeting minutes.** Perricone moved and Gravell seconded a motion to approve the minutes of the April 4, 2023 and May 9, 2023 meetings. Approval was unanimous.
- 5. Update on developing personnel policies/rules/guidelines.** Smith had identified a model personnel policy from the Vermont League of Cities and Towns that, with some changes, could be the base of a CVFiber Personnel Policy. It's grounded in rules/guidelines for employees, as well as other personnel (such as volunteer officers and board members), of public entities. Smith said the draft policy has also been lined up with any provisions current employees have in the agreements they signed when beginning work at CVFiber. Gilbert noted that the committee's goal is to move approval of the policy along as quickly as possible, while making sure there is due diligence done in the review of the proposal. He said the committee needed to decide if this is a policy we think we can forward to

the Governing Board for its consideration. The committee's review at this meeting is not the time for scrubbing up awkward sentences or fixing punctuation. He added that if this feels too fast a path, we could consider recommending that the document be adopted on an interim basis, with recommendations for any substantive changes to come later.

Gravell said that she is particularly interested in bullying and harassment protections in the policy. She said there is ongoing bullying at CVFiber. Smith agreed this is an important area to cover. We need a policy that applies to everyone in the organization, she said. Perricone said that if a CVFiber volunteer is accused of bullying, "We have a conversation with the volunteer; if there's bullying, we say, 'Stop it, or you have to go.'" Someone's status as a volunteer should not, essentially, allow them to bully others. Perricone noted that our delegates are appointed by their town's select boards, and CVFiber itself has no power to remove a delegate were a policy violated and dismissal justified. She thinks we need guidelines that specify how we apply restrictions. These guidelines may have to be developed later. Morris agreed this was a tough issue. Gilbert asked if we felt the board could deal with harassment and bullying complaints, or with political activity restrictions – are members up to that? Do we need to get outside help? Morris worried that we won't be able to move on the policy's adoption as quickly as we want. Board members will want to examine it closely. It has too much import for quick approval. Other areas were pointed to that might result in much discussion. Gilbert pointed to benefits that employees are entitled to. Gilbert also said he wanted to make sure we didn't cross any lines when it comes to free speech, specifically in the part of the policy dealing with political speech. Perricone said that for her, the key prohibition should be personnel not using CVFiber equipment to support specific political views.

All agreed that the draft policy was a good start; having a personnel policy in place is a pressing issue. Gilbert said that the draft may not be perfect, but we could endorse what we have and ask the Governing Board to consider it. It could perhaps be adopted on an interim basis, and changes made later as necessary. He said he wanted to make sure that the committee was doing the right thing. Is this process adequate? He said he thought the right thing was being able to move quickly but also being able to spend more time looking at this and trying to improve what we have; we can't just say that "once it gets passed by the board, we've done our work and that's it." Gravell said, "We have to start somewhere." Perricone, "I agree this is a good starting point, and an interim thing that gives us the opportunity if we have board members who say, 'I don't like this,' and we can say, 'OK, come to the committee meetings.'" Asked his opinion, Morris said, "Yes, this is exactly what I was thinking might work."

Gravell moved, and Perricone seconded, a motion to present the CVFiber Personnel Policy as developed by Smith based on the VLCT [Vermont League of

Cities and Towns] Personnel Policy to the CVFiber Governing Board with our endorsement for interim approval. The vote to do so was unanimous.

6. Update on digital equity efforts. Smith said that there is a lot happening on this front. The Vermont Community Broadband Board is scheduling listening sessions to gather information from stakeholders and the general public on equity issues surrounding high-speed broadband access. The recently passed federal BEAD [Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment] act will provide opportunities for us to weigh in with our goals. Perricone said she is very concerned about the many inaccuracies she's found in the Federal Communications Commission's broadband maps. Misinformation in those maps could force a homeowner to perhaps finally get a fast connection, but it would be exorbitantly expensive. Smith also noted we had received information from EAB [Equal Access to Broadband] about the services they could provide to CVFiber on equity issues.
7. Other business. There was none.
8. Adjourn. The meeting adjourned at 6:02 p.m.

-- Allen Gilbert