



CVFIBER OPERATIONS AND PLANNING COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

Virtually on MS Teams

December 14, 2023

Minutes Short Summary

The Operations Committee unanimously approved the minutes for the November 9, 2023 meeting. Linda Gravell has handled the CVFiber Dashboard, but going forward, she is going to rely on the data from Jennille Smith. Lucas Stubbs reported CVFiber is getting ready to light friendlies in CL02 and testing is almost complete. Jennille Smith noted that CVFiber has 1,419 passings and 183 miles of fiber and MSTs. Lucas Stubbs goal is to have the make ready work done during the winter for the next DA in Marshfield. Lucas Stubbs is taking steps now to ensure CVFiber has all that is needed with write outs and due diligence for MA01, 02, and 03. Jennille Smith reported that there is a request out for \$13 million in private funds for both construction and a BEAD match, which could be up to 25% or \$4 million; answers are due January 9th, 2024. The Governing Board approved the Straight Line Broadband contract for next year.

Present:

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

Absent: David Healy (Calais)

Others Present: Jerry Diamantides (Delegate, Berlin), Jennille Smith (Executive Director), Lucas Stubbs (Operations Manager), Kurt Gruendling (WCVT), and Roger Nishi (WCVT), and Sybil Schlesinger (Alternate, Moretown)

Call to order: Linda Gravell called the meeting to order at 5:36pm.

Additions to the agenda:

- None.

Public comment

- None.

Prior Meeting Minutes

- **MOTION** (Jeremy Matt, Second Christopher Shenk)
Move to approve the minutes of the November 9, 2023 meeting as drafted.
Abstain: Christopher Shenk
Passed unanimously.

Updates

- **CVFiber Dashboard:** Linda Gravell has been working on the dashboard. Going forward, she is going to rely on the data from Jennille Smith. Jennille Smith agreed. Henri Amistadi asked if the dashboard currently includes any operational statistics or utilization numbers, particularly network statistics. Roger Nishi replied yes and it's general information that can be shared.
- **Construction Progress:** Lucas Stubbs reported CVFiber is getting ready to light friendlies in CL02. Testing is almost complete. Construction has started in CL03. By end of year, the expectation is to have the Rumney School cabinet lit. Six crews will be operating with two additional anchor crews. Jennille Smith added that we have 1,419 passings and 183 miles of fiber and NSTs. Lucas Stubbs noted that Hardwick Electric works differently from our other partners with a different set of standards. Lucas Stubbs met with them this morning and CVFiber will work with their demands.
- **Customer Sign Ups:** Lucas Stubbs reported 48 customers.
- **Installations:** Lucas Stubbs said there have been two installations this week, partly because of the snowstorm on Monday. We are also waiting on the drop crew from Eustis. Once they are on board, this will speed us up considerably. Jennille Smith added there were no drops the week before. Roger Nishi added that part of this is because of waiting for areas to be lit up. We do not want the crews with no work. He expects that installations will not be up to ten/week until mid-January. Tom Fisher noted that with a 40% take rate, and assuming we more than double our current rate of installs to get to 25/week, it would still take 23 weeks to light up the current passings. He added it would take 4-6 months for each district for all customers to have service. Roger Nishi noted that a larger OLT might take that long, but we need to try to keep the process as smooth as possible. He does expect the number of installations/week to increase over ten, but he is not willing to state another number. Linda Gravell said that the 2024 budget accounts for ten/week.
- **Make Ready Status/CL03:** Lucas Stubbs reported that CL03 loops back into the meeting with Hardwick. They are factoring in areas, so they are doing the make ready work during the winter as soon as possible. If there is the need for twenty pole replacements, this takes a lot of time. His goal is to have the make ready work done during the winter. Henri Amistadi asked if poles could be installed when the ground is frozen; Lucas Stubbs said it can be done. Lucas Stubbs confirmed that he would be meeting weekly with Hardwick. Hardwick has concerns about contractors who are not their employees.
- **Permit Status/CL03, MA01, 02, 03:** Lucas Stubbs reported that Karen Kotecki did the write outs for CL03. He will meet with her at the beginning of the year to make sure they have all that is needed with write outs and due diligence for MA01, 02, and 03. Lucas Stubbs does not want any hold ups for next year. In Marshfield, there are areas without poles so issues are not necessarily pole replacements, and in other areas, residents have avoided poles so the lines are underground.
- **FY24 Plans:** Jennille Smith reported that there is a request out for \$13 million in private funds for both construction and a BEAD match, which could be up to 25% or \$4 million.

Answers are due January 9th, 2024. This coming Monday is the due date for questions from lenders.

- Linda Gravell asked if the funding would be available by March, and Jennille Smith concurred.
- Jerry Diamantides noted that some construction work might count as in kind service towards the BEAD match. He also noted that BEAD locations are limited so we need to be careful not to spend borrowed money where we could spend the BEAD grant. We have worked with NRTC to identify the BEAD areas.
- Henri Amistadi asked about in-state financing organizations. Jennille Smith noted that VIDA had money for broadband but their cap is \$4 million. Assets can also not be guaranteed twice. VCCB may also have additional funding solutions, such as a revolving line of credit or a program to assist low income Vermonters, but these are limited too. One lender is also local.
- Linda Gravell is concerned about the BEAD areas, that we might have planned construction in these areas for 2024. Jerry Diamantides noted that there will be no BEAD money in 2024, so we made sure that our plans for 2024 are non-BEAD eligible.
- Jeremy Matt asked about the status of the RDOF money. Do we no longer have access? Jerry Diamantides responded that CVFiber did not get RDOF funds. Michael Birnbaum did get RDOF funds in parts of our 20 towns. As far as Jerry Diamantides knows, no one has spent RDOF funds in our area. NEK is talking with Michael Birnbaum because he is also in their area. He only got the first threshold to continue. CVFiber is not going around the RDOF areas because we do not need to for BEAD. The possibility of this funding ended a while ago.
- Henri Amistadi asked about other available federal funding and if the new Finance Manager would be investigating these. Jennille Smith said that NRTC is looking at what grants might be available for CVFiber. NEK has gotten funding CVFiber cannot get because NEK's population is lower income.
- **CVFiber Warehouse Changes:** Jennille Smith reported that the warehouse will only be open Tuesday/Thursday the first quarter, and then five days/week for the remaining quarters. Our major deliveries are already in. The Governing Board approved the contract for Straight Line Broadband for next year.

WCVT Operations

- Roger Nishi noted that Lucas Stubbs had shared most of the information he intended to share. Tom Fisher asked how CVFiber fared in the storms. Kurt Gruending reported that there was only one customer who had problems. There are always more problems in winters. In hunting season, for example, we see bullet holes in fiber, which is why there is redundancy. This also explains why construction in rural areas costs more.
- Jerry Diamantides thanked everyone for a good year. Last year, we had hope, now CVFiber has subscribers and needs to be concerned about maintenance. Linda Gravell noted that Waitsfield is having difficulty reaching out to potential customers for installations, and asked if Olivia Kantyka could assist. Kurt Gruending said that they do ask Olivia Kantyka to step in after two attempts.

Adjourned at 6:31pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Jeremy Matt, Clerk