

Chittenden County Communications Union District (CCUD) Board Meeting

Governing Board Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, February 22, 3:00pm

Municipal representatives participating: Jessie Baker, representing South Burlington, Erik Wells, Chair, representing Williston, Regina Mahony, Vice Chair, representing Essex Junction, Lee Krohn, representing Shelburne, Marguerite Ladd, representing Essex Town, Nanette Rogers, Westford Town Administrator/representing Westford, Brad Holden, Underhill Town Administrator/representing Underhill, John Abbott, representing Jericho.

Others present: Charlie Baker, Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission (CCRPC) Executive Director, Emma Vaughn, CCRPC Communications Manager, Alex Kelley, Rural Innovations Solutions Inc. (RISI), Ellie de Villiers, Executive Director of Maple Broadband

1. Call to order; changes to the agenda | E. Wells called the meeting to order at 3:05pm.

2. Public comment period on items NOT on the agenda | There was no public comment.

3. Consider approving [minutes from February 8, 2023](#)

N. Rogers noted she emailed Ann to fix one typo she found in section 6 (should read “they” instead of “the”). B. Holden moved to approve, seconded by N. Rogers. Motion passed unanimously.

4. Dialogue with Ellie de Villiers, Executive Director of Maple Broadband

Erik introduced Ellie de Villiers to the group and thanked her for coming. E. de Villiers provided an overview of her experience in telecommunications, including the history of Maple Broadband (MB). A feasibility study was done, which recommended MB join another CUD or partner with a local service provider. Following an extensive process to look at all options, MB partnered with Waitsfield Champlain Valley Telecom. MB has used the model pioneered by EC Fiber, which is to build their own infrastructure and then partner with an operator. E. Wells opened the floor for questions. C. Baker asked if MB went through a formal RFP process or took a more informal approach; E. de Villiers noted that the process was more informal, and they went with a VT company with a long history and public success. B. Holden asked about the ownership of the infrastructure; E. de Villiers said EC Fiber owns it but outsourced everything; MB is more of a hybrid model in that Waitsfield is their operating partner. Many CUDs build infrastructure (meaning they manage the process and find a consulting firm to build) and then partner with an ISP. B. Holden noted that this could mean the CCCUD may exist in perpetuity. E. de Villiers suggested the CCCUD needs to figure out what makes the most sense for its member towns as well as the problem it’s solving. C. Baker noted that the RISI evaluation suggested partnering with a private provider.

E. de Villiers continued to discuss MB’s history, status (20 member towns, in partnership with Waitsfield) and financial stability goals. She encouraged members to read [Act 71](#), particularly the sections about competition and market failure. She noted that hiring an ED is one option, and outsourcing this work, at least at the beginning, is another to consider. E. Wells asked if there are larger firms who do this outsourcing work? E. de Villiers said there are, and noted Otter Creek is using one they found through [an RFP process](#); they contracted on a long-term basis and hired a project director. E. de Villiers / VCUDA will get back to the group on other examples. E. Villiers noted that the BEAD funding is going to change to 25/3 is under-served (will

hit in 2025). Need Act 71 to first get the un-served; and this funding is limited in CCCUD's case. The state has not yet figured out how they are going to allocate the BEAD funding.

B. Holden asked if this CUD could team up with another, and E. de Villiers said there are many ways this could be handled and encouraged members to think outside the box. Discussion ensued.

E. Wells thanked E. de Villiers for her time and insight and noted the Board has a lot to consider.

5. Consider joining VCUDA (They are currently calculating CCCUD's dues)

The dues amount was not available at the time of the meeting. J. Baker noted that our intention is to join, but we should table this until we have a number. Members agreed.

6. Draft Executive Director Job Description

E. Wells noted that the Board will need to decide next steps, given the earlier discussion. R. Mahony noted that it would be helpful to know pros and cons for hiring an ED or contracting with a project manager. C. Baker asked if E. Villiers has a sense of which CUDs have gone in which directions; she noted that Rob (VCUDA) has this information. A. Kelley noted that there doesn't seem to be enough work to justify a full-time position at this point. Discussion ensued. E. Wells noted that the next steps will be to gather more information and think further about this, and encouraged members to contact him, Charlie or Ann with further thoughts.

7. Discuss logo ideas with Emma Vaughn

A logo design will be put on hold while the path forward is determined. E. Vaughn noted that she can be available to design something as needed.

8. Clerk's Report

C. Baker noted the Vermont Communications Board approved the \$300k preconstruction grant on 2/13. A grant agreement should be available by the end of the week and the CCRPC is set up to receive the funds on behalf of CCCUD. Discussion ensued about a possible scope modification if the group wants to proceed with project management vs. hiring staff.

9. Treasurer's Report

E. Wells noted the Treasurer's Report was covered within the Clerk's Report.

10. Review of next steps

The group agreed to hold off on looking at the table outlining next steps.

11. Future agenda items for consideration

- a. Talking with private sector entities (such as GWI)
- b. Talking with another CUD
- c. Brainstorming about the ED / project manager options

12. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 4:20pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Emma Vaughn