

1 **Northwest Communications Union District**
2 **September 29, 2020 DRAFT Minutes**
3 **Virtual Meeting (Zoom Meeting ID: 816 5997 1375)**
4

5 **Attendance:** Emily Klofft (NRPC), Sean Kio, Chair (Enosburgh), Christopher Cota Vice-Chair
6 (Fairfax), Everett McGinley (Montgomery), Dominic Derosia (Berkshire), J.R. Cox (Alburgh Alt.), Stu
7 McGowan (Alburgh Alt.), Tara Wright (Georgia Alt.), Nick Norris (Sheldon), Ken Millman (Alburgh),
8 and Shaun Coleman (NRPC)
9

10 **Call to Order and Adjustments to the Agenda**

11 Chair S. Kio called the meeting to order at 6:05 p.m. No adjustments to the agenda.
12

13 **Roll Call**

14 See Attendance above.
15

16 **Approval of Minutes**

17 *C. Cota motioned to approve the minutes. E. McGinley seconded. Motion carried.*
18

19 **Treasurer's Report - NRPC**

20 E. Klofft reported the grant agreements from DPS for the CUD Planning Grant and the Broadband
21 Innovation Grant have been received.
22

23 C. Cota noted CUDs are supposed to have an annual budget on or before October 21st. E. Klofft will
24 put together a draft for everyone to review.
25

26 *T. Wright motioned to approve the Treasurer's Report. C Cota seconded. Motion carried.*
27

28 **CUD Bank Account**

29 E. Klofft reported that a People's Trust bank account should be opened this week for the NWCUD.
30 Catherine Dimitruk is working on the paperwork.
31

32 **Broadband Innovation Grant RFP**

33 E. Klofft presented the draft RFP.

- 34 • \$30,000 for feasibility study and \$30,000 for business plan.
- 35 • The goal is to have some base plan and study to start that can be used to leverage
36 funding for a more enhanced study and plan from other sources.
- 37 • BIG includes all towns in Franklin and Grand Isle except Alburgh and Isle la Motte
38 because they are currently working on a separate BIG.
- 39 • There are several elements that are required by DPS.
- 40 • Plan is to get the RFP in final form by October 13th for the members to review for
41 approval. Proposals due into CUD for review by mid-November.
42

43 A discussion ensued regarding which consulting firms and RFP publishing sites and portals the RFP
44 would be sent to.
45

1 All agreed that Sean, Chris, Emily and Everett would finalize the RFP before sending it to the group
2 for final approval then release.

3

4 **Territory Expansion**

5 S. Kio reported that Rob Fish from DPS sent an email to all CUDs about adding more municipalities
6 from outside of their region. Municipalities that could benefit joining NWCUD include Essex Town,
7 Milton, Westford and Colchester. Chris noted this may be coming from the results of a CUD
8 feasibility study in southern Vermont where there were not enough towns within the CUD to
9 make a service cost effective.

10

11 A discussion began on waiting for the feasibility study first before opening up membership to
12 municipalities outside the region. More than likely a build out will be phased approach. Milton and
13 Essex are likely well served overall compared to other municipalities currently in the District such
14 as Richford and Berkshire. The Chair said we will revisit the topic another time but are certain
15 amicable. Tara added that if they reach out to us first then we will have to decide sooner rather than
16 later.

17

18 **CUD Subcommittees**

19 E. McGinley recommended forming Finance, Communications and Projects Subcommittees.
20 Eventually an Operations Subcommittee should be added.

21

22 Emily will send a doodle poll will be sent out to gauge interest from the membership in serving on a
23 subcommittee.

24

25 **Insurance**

26 C. Cota provided an update on the NWCUD's Insurance. Telecomm Insurance is the only provider
27 willing to cover because the District is new.

- 28 • \$1,000,000 liability with expanded \$2,000,000 umbrella that also covers automobile
- 29 coverage for any travel related to CUD business
- 30 • Cyber Security Insurance for data risks
- 31 • Executive Liability for issues related to contracts
- 32 • The estimate is \$4,660/year

33

34 Everett asked if the CUD was required to go out to bid for any RFPs. Shaun noted that NRPC as the
35 Clerk/Treasurer would prefer the CUD go out to bid for RFPs in alignment with NRPC's
36 procurement policy. Emily noted there is nothing in the bylaws stating specifically that the CUD has
37 to go out to bid. Everett suggested a procurement policy be developed in the near future. Chris
38 added that a social media policy should be put in place as well.

39

40 Everett cautioned against referring everyone to the Google drive for information that the District
41 has developed. Each member should be sent District related documents directly. This may be
42 something that should be added to one of the current policies in place. Shaun added that financial
43 documents, insurance policies and personal information should not be stored on the Google drive.
44 Sean said we will be able to store everything under our Office365 account once it is set up. For now,
45 everything resides on NRPC's server.

46

1 **Department of Public Service Update**

2 S. Kio reported that we had round 3 of connectivity initiative proposals that was due this afternoon.
3 There were 5 addresses in Franklin (Franklin Telephone) and 17 addresses in Georgia (Comcast).
4 He and Tara talked about the proposal because it was relevant to Georgia. The response was
5 basically the same as the one submitted for round 2.
6

7 Tara said that we weren't going to say no to one of the fastest services available. The preference
8 would be 100 symmetrical. The residences include Patty Hill Road and Reynolds Road which are
9 two spots that the town was hoping Comcast would expand services to.
10

11 S. Kio reported that someone made an inquiry at the last VCUDA meeting regarding CUD's business
12 structure. The state is willing to cooperate and collaborate with NWCUD on a number of fronts. The
13 moment the CUD becomes a competitive ISP we will lose those benefits. State wants to make sure
14 that CUDs have a policy or goals defining what the CUD's intent is. Our goals and policies have that
15 covered.
16

17 S. Kio added that Rob Fish from PSD was looking for a DUNS number or other identification for the
18 planning grant. A W-9 was allowable but we need to follow up with getting a DUNS.
19

20 PSD wants to expand the wi-fi hotspot program which is what our grant is supposed to do. The new
21 PSD grant is for municipalities that did not take advantage of the first round of funding. Sean has
22 vendor information and we could contract with him separately for towns that did apply to the first
23 round.
24

25 S. Coleman added that NRPC conducted surveys (name, strength, speeds, any amenities for public
26 like benches or shelters where the public can sit outside of the building) on public wi-fi spots. The
27 survey is wrapping up this week. The data will be available shortly.
28

29 **Member Updates**

30 Fairfax – C. Cota reported that he spoke with Kim Gates from Franklin Telephone. She is willing to
31 present to the group in the near future. He also reached out to Duncan Communication and Stowe
32 Cable. His plan is to reach out to the small providers first, wireless second and then Burlington
33 Telecomm. The last ISPs to be invited are Consolidated and Comcast because their operations are
34 more well known.
35

36 He has begun researching revenue bonds for the CUD noting it would be beneficial to retain a
37 consultant who has experience in revenue bonds.
38

39 A secondary wi-fi spot in Fairfax has been established at the Community Center in the village with
40 some limited staffing.

41 Georgia – T. Wright reported that a bulk mailing could be done with a vendor.

42 Bakersfield – No report.

43 Fairfield – No report. Jonathan had a conflict tonight.

44 Montgomery – E. McGinley noted the town is looking at adding a wi-fi hotspot at the Grange Hall.
45 He also received the results from the COOP survey which are on the Google drive. He has begun to
46 analyze the results and will write them up and send them out to everyone.

1 Enosburgh – S. Kio reported that everyone should send Emily any additional public wi-fi hotspot
2 locations.
3 All CUDs may be getting an additional \$30k from the Vermont Community Foundation.
4 Sheldon – Nick reported that there was nothing new but the Town is very interested in helping out
5 the CUD as needed.
6 Berkshire – Dominic introduced himself as the new representative to Berkshire and he’s also with
7 the NE Supervisory Union.
8 Highgate – No report.
9 Alburgh – K. Millman reported that he received the VEC survey data. He has begun analyzing the
10 survey in part to determine what types of survey questions the CUD will want to use.
11
12 S. McGowan added that Alburgh is one of the poorest communities in the state. The difference
13 between \$75 and \$95 a month for service is significant and should not be understated. Keep this in
14 mind when developing survey questions. Chris replied that one of the NWCUDs core values is
15 affordability as stated in the adopted goals.
16
17 The Town continues to work with Matrix on their feasibility study. Matrix asked for a list of towns
18 that have signed up with the NWCUD. PSD suggested we meet with Matrix in similar fashion as
19 other ISPs. Likely Matrix is expanding in areas where Comcast isn’t.
20
21 Consolidated has been laying fiber along VT78 for back haul. Ken has held off reaching out to other
22 Island Towns until the NWCUD website is up.
23
24 **Other Business**
25 E. McGinley reported that the meetings are recorded and sometimes are broadcast live
26
27 C. Cota mentioned that there may be additional federal funding in April.
28
29 S. Kio added the USDA has a broadband specific website that was launched recently.
30
31 E. Klofft added that she, Sean, Chris and Shaun will be working on a process for the RFP planning
32 grant.
33
34 **Public Comment**
35 None.
36
37 **Adjourn**
38 *E. McGinley motioned to adjourn. C. Cota seconded. Motion carried.*
39
40 Meeting adjourned at 7:32 p.m.
41
