

Northwest Communications Union District

Governing Board Special Meeting

August 12, 2021, 6:00 PM

Physical Location: Fairfax Community Library- 75 Hunt Street, Fairfax, VT 05454

Or Remotely via Zoom

Attendance: S. Kio, Chair (Enosburg & Enosburg Falls), MC. Graziano (Isle La Motte), S. McGowan (Alburgh), K. Millman (Alburgh), D. Stanley (Fairfax), MK. Raymond (Fairfax), J. Kane (Sheldon), C. Fegard (Richford), B. Churchill (Bakersfield), E. McGinley (Montgomery), E. Klofft (NRPC), S. Coleman (NRPC)

Call to Order and Adjustments to the Agenda

S. Kio called the meeting to order at 6:06 PM. There were no adjustments to the agenda.

Approval of Minutes

K. Millman motioned to approve minutes, J. Kane seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

Treasurer's Report- NRPC

E. Klofft presented the Treasurer's Report. E. McGinley motioned to approve bills to present for NRPC administrative expenses and NRPC direct expenses totaling \$4,842.81, B. Churchill seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

USDA Rural Business Development Grant

The Board discussed the USDA Rural Business Development Grant, S. Kio stated he will let the board know when they have a grant agreement in hand as well as pass it along to the finance committee.

Consultant RFQ Selection

There are 2 or 3 consultants interested, but the Board wants to hold off because of the business planning phase that will hopefully happen soon.

Bookkeeper RFQ Update

There has been no interest in this position, but the State's new VCBB Board is seeking to hire a grant administration/ finance person at the state level to help CUD's so that could solve the issue.

Broadband Administrator RFP Update

There has been no interest, and it has been posted twice. Many other regional CUDs are having the same experience. S. Kio stated that other CUDs have had more success by making positions that include benefits. S. Coleman discussed a few options for additional benefits which include health insurance coverage, or changing the position title to something like Executive Director, or create a contract in which the CUD would pay the salary for the position but it would be under the municipality's payroll and

could receive benefits from the municipalities. He referenced the current situation in which the NRPC employs the zoning administrator that works for both Sheldon and Highgate. E. Klofft also pointed out that the short-term nature of the position is a challenge for attracting anyone, but it is difficult because there is no certainty that the funding for the position will continue. C. Fegard said that really advertising the fact that this position can be done from anywhere could be helpful in finding someone. E. McGinley stated that he thinks that the fact that the CUD does not have an executive director is part of the reason there has not been much success in moving forward. There is already enough work for a full time position and S. Kio is doing much more work than can be expected from a volunteer. S. McGowan asked if the person who takes the position will need to live in Vermont, E. McGinley stated that while there is no legal need for it to be someone within the state, they will need to attend in person meetings and being in state seems very beneficial. S. McGowan suggested that looking for someone that is younger and might not check all the qualifications boxes but that will be willing to learn and are eager to get a job that will lend them experience. K. Millman said he will contact UVM and see if they have any recent graduates or alumni who would be interested in the position. S. McGowan asked E. Klofft if the position has been posted on LinkedIn, she says no, it has been posted on Facebook, the Fiber Broadband Association, State Bid System, and Front Porch Forum. S. Kio said he will look at changing the position description and benefits by no later than September 2nd because that is the next board meeting.

VCUDA Dues

VCUDA is now suggesting that CUDs pay dues based on premises, miles, and number of subscribers. This will help cover operational expenses for VCUDA, as they've recently hired an administrator. The proposed amount for NWCUD is around \$1,500. The Board discussed the potential benefits VCUDA could provide. S. Kio and other members stated they have hesitations about paying dues without better information about what benefits VCUDA can have to the CUD. B. Churchill suggested the group requests a list of benefits from VCUDA. E. McGinley and S. McGowan both stated that the VCUDA will play an important role in the future of broadband and that paying this small amount will be worth it. J. Kane stated that he sees investing in certifying board members in broadband fiber development certification as a better investment than spending it on VCUDA. This would provide credit along with in house expertise. E. Klofft stated that if VCUDA will be lobbying, no federal money can be used for those dues.

Sub-Committee Updates

Finance has not met but plans to meet this month. PMO has not met. Communications has not met.

Member Updates

K. Millman mentioned that Alburgh and Matrix have signed a memorandum of understanding, the next steps are that Matrix will create a splash page on their website and promote it to Alburgh residents through Facebook, FPF, and a mailer. B. Churchill mentioned that Bakersfield has gotten their first ARPA money, and that because of demographic changes their will probably be another state senate seat for Franklin County. C. Fegard said she has put word out looking for her replacement in Richford, she has heard back from one person who was interested.

Other Business

No other business.

Public Comment

No public comment.

Adjournment

C. Fegard motioned to adjourn, J. Kane seconded. Motion passed unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 7:17PM.