

Marlboro Committee for Universal Broadband (MCUB) Meeting
Tuesday, May 26, 2020 at 4:00 – 5:00 pm

Agenda

1. Discuss implications of the Broadband Feasibility Study released by the WRC's Broadband Consulting Team under a grant from the VT Dep't. of Public Service. See link at <http://www.windhamregional.org/broadband>
2. All five Vermont CUDs are considering forming a Consortium. Why? What are the pros and cons? – Steven
3. A brief review of the six firms interviewed to date by the DVCUD's Vendor Committee.
- Bob
4. How will Green Mountain Power, Jacksonville Electric and VELCO be key to the successful build of a fiber infrastructure by the DVCUD. =Steven
5. "About Us" article to inform the public about the DVCUD and how we (MCUB) fit together. See draft below for your comment and/or suggestions.
6. MCUB's Next Steps: What can friends and neighbors do to get fiber to Marlboro sooner, rather than later? Brainstorm!
7. Other

Note to attend this meeting Join Zoom Meeting
<https://packet.zoom.us/j/256032500>

Meeting ID: 256 032 500

About Us – The DVCUD

We are ten towns in southern Vermont who have joined forces to form the Deerfield Valley Communications Union District (DVCUD) first organized on April 9, 2020.

In 2019, Governor Scott signed the enabling legislation for two or more towns to create a Communications Union District (CUD). A CUD functions as a municipal entity that serves a region for the sole purpose of providing high-speed broadband for all. Access to full use of the internet is essential to economic development while preserving our environment and quality of life.

The member towns of the DVCUD are working as one to address this 21st century necessity.

As provided by law, the DVCUD is governed by a Board with each member town having one voting representative. A town's CUD Representative is appointed by the town's Select Board for a one-year renewable term. The Board elects a Chair, Vice Chair and Secretary/Clerk at the CUD's Annual Meeting on May 12 every year.

A CUD in Vermont is authorized to conduct and oversee all the business necessary to fulfill its mission, including strategic finances, planning, construction, management, customer service and negotiations to contract for all services to that end.

The 2019 Vermont law that enables the formation of a CUD also permits the use of municipal "revenue bonds" to build a broadband network to serve member towns. This law also guarantees that the member towns' taxpayers will not be liable for the repayment of any CUD indebtedness. Repayment is made by adding a fixed user fee to the subscriber's monthly fee for broadband service.

See Vermont Statutes Title 30 Public Service, Chapter 82: Communications Union Districts §3051 – 3079 clearly authorizes the formation, function, responsibilities, and accountability of a CUD.

History

Citizens of the picturesque and rural towns of Vermont are limited by the poor quality of internet service provided by the private sector. To date, private corporations have little reason to invest in a "future proof" infrastructure that would guarantee high-speed broadband access to all locations. Small towns realize that they do not have sufficient population densities to justify the private capital investment in a service that promises little prospect of a profitable return.

More than ten years ago some towns have formed local committees to explore how they might improve their connectivity. In two member towns, Readsboro and Marlboro, the work of these broadband committees resulted in applications for grants, requests for proposals (RFPs) and consideration of bids from service providers. Readsboro signed a contract with a firm to do a pole study which is required prep for any installation of additional cable on power poles. Funded by a successful grant application, this work has begun in Readsboro.

Marlboro's broadband committee (MCUB) reviewed the bids received and found none were acceptable due to financial concerns. Individual towns in Vermont are unable to use municipal bonds to build broadband networks.

Every member town of the DVCU has citizen volunteers who have met either informally or as a publicly appointed committee to advocate for high speed broadband for all. Prior to formation of the DVCUD members of these local advocate met informally to share ideas about how best to improve access to the internet in their towns. These meetings were held in Jacksonville and

moderated by Ann Manwaring of Wilmington. The participants in these “Deerfield Valley Broadband Group” discussions represented 6-8 towns including the largest in our county, Brattleboro’s Patrick Moreland. Also attending were corporate representatives, members of the press, and guests from Bennington County.

The Deerfield Valley Broadband Group asked towns to consider forming a Deerfield Valley Communications Union District (DVCUD) and presenting the question as an Article requiring a vote at March Town Meetings. The Article to join the DVCUD was approved unanimously in five towns: Halifax, Marlboro, Whitingham, Wilmington, and Stratton. These five were the founding members of the DVCUD and organized legally to become a municipal entity on April 9, 2020.

At the organizational meeting, the Representatives of the five towns unanimously voted to accept two more towns: Readsboro and Wardsboro making seven Representatives on the Governing Board. The Board adopted Mission and Vision Statements, By-laws and a Conflict of Interest Policy. All Board meetings are open to the public and regularly scheduled for the third Wednesday of the month at 5 pm.

As required by statute, the DVCUD held its Annual Meeting on May 12, 2020 at 5:00 PM. Due to the pandemic emergency, this meeting was conducted publicly online using Zoom. The prior meeting’s election of officers was confirmed and three new member towns were approved unanimously: Dover, Jamaica, and Stamford. The ten member Board appointed Paul Butler of Marlboro as Treasurer of the DVCUD. The Treasurer was authorized to open a bank account and obtain a registered business name (trademark) as DVFiber.

The DVCUD Board welcomes additional towns to join in this broadband initiative. If you are considering this opportunity, please contact our Vice Chair Steven John. He will be happy to answer any questions the residents of your town may have. The only requirements for a town to join are: 1) a vote by the Select Board to request town membership in the DVCUD, and 2) the Select Board appoints one Representative and two Alternates to serve on the DVCUD Board.

5/17/2020 - sbj