

Marlboro Committee for Universal Broadband (MCUB)

Meeting Tuesday, January 19 at 4:00 – 5:00 remotely via Zoom link provided below

Agenda w/ Minutes Appended below. No decisions were made.

1. Introductions and protocol for meeting online.
2. Approve minutes - NA.
3. Public Comments: Any concerns, questions or ideas?

Let's be sure that this meeting addresses questions from everyone, either live or submitted online.

Present: Robert Glover, Fred Kopacz, Richard Hurtig, Annie Bartlett, Andy Reichman, and Steven John.

Absent: Bob Anderson, Bill Esses, and Jean Boardman.

Old Business

4. Three candidate locations recommended to DVFiber to inform planning and design for a single distribution hub in Marlboro:
 - Town Center (Office)
 - Volunteer Fire House
 - Private property on Rte. 9 with owner's permission
5. DVFiber contract for pole studies (pole surveys) completed
 - Matrix completed report for Halifax, Stamford and Whitingham.
 - Including Readsboro's prior survey, four towns are ready for construction design and build.
6. DVFiber Financials – See DVFiber.net for more details
 - The Board approved the Annual 2020 Report and 2021 Budget on Dec. 9.
 - This budget will be revised as additional funds are raised to support future contracts for design and construction.

Our prospects and timing for building a fiber network will depend on DVFiber's ability to raise funds, by grants, loans, and donations. As a municipal entity, charitable donations to DVFiber qualify for tax benefits.

15 million is estimated to build out fiber for the Tier I towns, the six most poorly served. This includes Marlboro. It costs \$35k per mile of road to build Fiber to the Premises FTTP or about \$3 million per town. CCI is laying fiber in Brattleboro to compete with Comcast cable. Fiber will have the competitive edge. CCI plans to connect all but 700 premises in Brattleboro. The density of premises in Brattleboro makes this profitable for them.

Steven listed all the roads in Marlboro that are awarded to CCI to be connected with a subsidy from the FCC. 190 residents in Marlboro are included in the FCC's Rural Development Opportunity Fund awarded to CCI. The roads affected by RDOF include Augur Hole, Stratton, Adams Brook, Lower Dover, Jenckes, Grant, Lehar and parts of Higley Hill Roads.

Steven hopes be able to share a map now being reviewed by the DVFiber's Vendor Committee as they write a Request for Proposal (RFP). It should be issued soon and available to the public.

Richard says we need to have some sense of what it is we're trying to accomplish. How long will it take? The poles are there and we see CCI's cabinets. Is that where the fiber to our homes would come from? Yes, according to Steven. CCI will lash their fiber to the copper lines they already own connecting all our homes. This gives them a tremendous financial advantage over other companies.

"Is there reticence to build out to our town?" That is true, and there is a business plan for our District that is vetted as financially feasible. We average about 5 houses per mile which would not provide enough profit for solely private venture. That's where the private/public partnership may make it possible to connect everyone.

Rob Glover reminded the committee that there is nothing more important than getting high-speed broadband to every premises in Vermont.

Richard said that things may change favorably with the new administration in Washington. Will the Rural Electrification program be revived to provide universal broadband? Peter Welsch is pushing for this.

Steven encouraged folks to share their personal stories about the internet divide with legislators, both federal and state.

7. Vermont CUD Association – PSD map online at <https://legislature.vermont.gov/Documents/2020/WorkGroups/JITOC/Documents%20and%20Testimony/W~Robert%20Fish~CUD%20Update~11-13-2020.pdf>

- Two new members approved: Addison CUD and Otter Creek CUD
- Officer elected, including our own Ann Manwaring as VCUDA Treasurer
- Priority issues for lobbying the VT Legislature are being developed

New Business

8. DVFiber - next steps:

- Dec. 18, DVfiber Reps. met with our Windham County Legislative Delegation to brief them on what it will take to get "the job done".

The VT House Committee on Energy and Technology is where the legislative work is being done to support CUDs and our work to bridge the "digital divide". Three hearings will be held this week and are available live and as recordings for your information. Testimony on Tuesday was from all of Vermont's CUDs, tomorrow will be EC Fiber and Valley Net followed by the power companies and coops on Thursday. Pay attention to the drafting of a broadband bill starting next week.

- Request for Proposal for design and construction will be issued by the Vendor Committee pending Board approval.
- A "high level design" to show how all premises in our District will be connected by a fiber network.

- Fund raising – charitable gifts, foundation and business support, government grants and loans, private placements (loans by investors and banks)
- A strategy to achieve and incremental build-out and a specific plan for where to build first. *
- Given a plan, fundraising will begin in earnest, including government grants and loans, support from foundations, businesses, charitable gifts, and private placements (loans by investors and banks).

*The timing of any phase of this work are entirely dependent on available funding.

9. Other

Next MCUB meeting – January 19, 2021 at 4:00 pm

Use the following link to join this public meeting remotely. All are welcome.

Marlboro Committee for Universal Broadband is inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting.

Topic: MCUB monthly meeting - November 24th 2020

Time: Nov 24, 2020 04:00 PM Eastern Time (US and Canada)

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89843914815?pwd=VkJR6WkxTU1BMA29CCHBSL0k3bnRXZz09>

Meeting ID: 898 4391 4815

Passcode: 516993

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