

NEWBURY TELECOMMUNICATIONS RURAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
INFRASTRUCTURE DISTRICT.

Monday, May 13, 2019 4:30 PM, Space on Main

Attendees: Claude Phipps, Chair; Edward Childs, Nate Dudenhoeffer, Liane Allen (via video conference); Rick Hausman, Guest

Call to Order: Claude called the meeting to order at 4:50.

Noting that we fell short of a quorum by one member, we decided not to review the previous minutes nor take any other formal action at this meeting.

Report from Corinth Broadband Group: The Corinth committee has attempted to reach out to Topsham Telephone, but have had no response to date. Their next board meeting is Tuesday evening 5/14/19.

Northern Borders Regional Commission Grant: Ed submitted the NBRC grant application last week. (He had earlier emailed the application in draft to the REDInet board for review.) Using a Powerpoint he had prepared, Ed outlined the key provisions of the grant. The goal of the grant is to hire a consultant to develop a business plan and arrange the financing in preparation for covering 30% of Newbury with fiber. The NBRC application for \$24,000 is matched by \$10,000 of the pending USDA grant; \$8,116 of the ThinkVermont funding (already secured); and \$3,084 of cash-on-hand. The project plan would have the project completed by 9/21.

Nate suggested that the project could be completed more quickly than 9/21.

Consultants: Ed spoke with potential consultant Chris Campbell and received suggestions as to what a consultant might do for REDInet and the rough cost. After receiving the cost estimate based on the CCI engineering study, the consultant would review the estimate for “reasonableness,” formulate a business plan, raise funds for Phase 1 of business plan (30% build out in Newbury), negotiate contract with CCI for phase 1 and draw up the contract, and get ready to build. Chris estimated 178 hours at \$230/hour = \$41,000.

We added the name of Stan Williams to the list of possible consultants. Williams has worked for EC Fiber and is known to Nate. stannorth@gmail.

Nate suggested that we might want to work with two consultants; one based on business and the other based on broadband technical competencies.

Discussion of RFPs and Relation to CCI: We are likely developing two RFPs: one for hiring a consultant as soon as grant funding becomes available; the second, developed by the consultant, would be for build-out of the network. For the build-out RFP, Nate recommended that we develop the proposal at a general level to be able to go out to bid

with several providers. Liane suggested we should include Spectrum among the potential bidders. (Nate raised the concern that if we just have CCI do the build-out without going out to bid, legal questions might be raised, specifically because there might not be enough separation between tax-advantaged financing and a private contractor.)

Regarding the contract with CCI to conduct the engineering study, Claude has submitted “Version 3.1” of the contract—in this version the town has no obligation for clearing right of ways—but we have not heard back from CCI.

USDA Business Development Grant: We have no further word on whether our grant application has been accepted. Claude reported that the Newbury Town attorney, Jim Barlow, had reviewed the USDA application on behalf of the town, which is grantee. Barlow found that a reasonable arrangement would be that the town receives the money and pays the bills. Beyond that, the REDInet would work directly with the consultant and any contractors. We are waiting to hear back from Susi Poland of USDA about the suitability of that arrangement.

Chesterfield NH Town Arrangement with CCI: Ed put up on the screen the CCI response to the to the RFP that the town of Chesterfield had presented to CCI. That document included CCI’s proposed pricing, which included VDSL and fiber pricing options. (Unsurprisingly, under CCI’s pricing model, VDSL is invariably the cheaper alternative.) We discussed the fact that CCI would be setting the rates for our network if we followed Chesterfield’s model. We haven’t so far obtained the Chesterfield RFP. Nate suggested that we look in the Town of Chesterfield’s website.

General Discussion:

Bonnie Taylor of Newbury Village has expressed interest in being on the REDInet board. Claude encouraged her to attend the next meeting.

We discussed the offer by Dave Snedeker of the Northeast Vermont Development Agency (NVDA) [dsnedeker@nvda.net] to coordinate the local broadband initiatives across Vermont and potentially participate in an NBRC broadband capacity building grant. Though we are a year or so ahead of some other participating groups, we agreed that cooperating with NVDA’s initiative would be to their advantage and perhaps to ours, as well.

Next steps: In anticipation of USDA and NBRC funding, Claude will work on an RFP for hiring a consultant.

Adjournment: We adjourned at 6:40 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Rick Hausman