

NEWBURY TELECOMMUNICATIONS RURAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
INFRASTRUCTURE DISTRICT.

Next REDInet Meeting: Monday, August 12, Space on Main, 4:30 pm

DRAFT MINUTES

Monday, July 22, 2019, 4:30 PM, Space on Main

Attendees: Claude Phipps, Chair; Edward Childs, Lenice Cicchini, Chip Conquest; Rick Hausman, guest, arrived at 4:45

Call to Order: Claude called the meeting to order at 4:40.

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

Conference call: We spoke via telephone with Don Williams, PhD., Senior Broadband Specialist, Infrastructure, National Telecom & Information Administration, U.S. Dept. of Commerce: (202) 482-2310

At Claude's request, Don had reviewed the draft contract with Consolidated Communications of 6/6/2019. Among his comments:

- Overall, the contract is well-crafted and worth pursuing. "On the right track."
- Private-public partnerships are "dicey." The private sector is highly incentivized pre-subscription, but less so post-. The municipal status can lend financial stability. The public side will have inevitable political problems.
- The non-disclosure agreement is OK, but be prepared for individuals in the community complaining about the lack of transparency. We should have a good explanation prepared in advance.
- From CCI's point-of view, this should be a good project, particularly the "personal marketing" that the board will undertake. CCI should divide Newbury into sections, making sure that the first served are happy (pleased with the service).
- Don asked if CCI is doing a business plan.
- Permitting must be a CCI responsibility
- CCI should not be expected to engage in Topsham Tel territory. We should try to get more precision on the number of TT phones in Newbury.

Don is sending us seven representative RFPs for consultants who would be undertaking the full project (unlike the RFP REDI plans to develop for just the evaluation of the engineering study contract and the study itself.)

The call with Don Williams ended at 5:05

Board membership: We discussed recruiting new board members and one promising lead was advanced. He lives p.t. in Newbury, p.t. in Alexandria VA.

USDA Rural Development Grant: We received the USDA grant for \$19k, down from the \$20k we had applied for. Claude proposed that we cut back the legal services line item, since that was based on a very loose estimate. We discussed the need to renegotiate with USDA RD because the original grant committed to hiring a consultant for the whole project for an amount that is likely pay for a consultant only through the engineering study. Chip “voiced angst” that we’ll only be completing four of the seven stated goals, at best. Claude will call Elijah of USDA about the ambiguity of performance goals versus overall goals.

Consultant recruitment: Lenice, Rick and others expected that Chris Campbell would be engaged immediately to do usher through the engineering study. Ed clarified that Chris Campbell can only be hired through an RFP process, and that he was awaiting written comments from Don Williams.

Northern Borders grant status: Ed contacted them and was told to expect news about the grant during the first week of August.

Topsham Tel: No contact. We’ll need legal advice as to how to serve TT’s territory.

General comments: Claude agreed to distribute Don Williams’ written suggestions and to follow up with USDA on our concerns about the contract. Chip outlined key next steps: 1) We get clear that the USDA grant is OK without having to meet all the explicit goals outlined in the original grant; 2) We get the green light from CCI on the engineering study contract; 3) We make minor revisions incorporating, among other changes, Don Williams’ suggestions. 4) We send out RFPs for oversight of the engineering study contract.

Adjournment: The meeting ended at 6:00 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Rick Hausman