

Otter Creek
Communications Union
District
November 5, 2020
Meeting Minutes

Attendance: Bill Moore (Brandon), Cassandra Hayes (Goshen), Amanda O'Connor (RRPC), Sam Jackson (Pittsford), Chris Custer (Hubbardton), Tim Munks (Castleton)

Guests: Beth Bumbarger (CEO) and Michael Mateja (CTO) from Hub 66

Meeting opened at 6:00 p.m.

Agenda approved: Amended to include a presentation from Hub 66

- New member approval: Castleton has voted to join our CUD.
- Chris made a motion that Castleton be included in our CUD. Sam seconded the motion, the motion passed.
 - Fair Haven and Poultney are still in the beginning stages of deciding to join.
- **Hub 66 Presentation:** Offering a hybrid install, provides a mix of fiber, towers (water towers included), small radio towers, and micro pops on homes or businesses that allows the expansion of the coverage map. They state they are able to provide customers with up to 1 gig or 1000 mb of service. They are able to utilize existing fiber or can string new lines as well. They state that they are trying to do things in a low cost way that provides the most service. They are also able to use wireless frequencies to provide service, but service is more limited to 200-500 mb/sec. This option works for areas where high speed internet is not available. They can provide wireless links for areas and homes that are spread out such as farms and rural areas that would not be cost effective to string fiber.
 - They have offered to provide our CUD with a project plan.
 - Questions from CUD members: **The project done in Rupert Vermont, they were able to wrap new fiber around First Lights existing fiber?** It was clarified that Hub 66 buys the fiber from First Light. They then wrap the residential fiber around the commercial fiber.
 - **What is the cost per mile?** They didn't know what the exact cost is, just that it is a case by case basis. It is determined by whether it is new construction or just over lashed.
 - Line of site, the lowest service that is provided is 150-200 mb/sec. If there is a lot of tree coverage then it is about 50-60 mb/sec. They don't provide service under 50 mb/sec. If that is the case, they try to look for another solution.
 - **With the micro pop concept, will you need bigger fiber pipes to provide 2-3 gig of service?** Yes, with available service is dependent on the optics of the fiber. Currently they have wireless network links that provide 4-6 gigs of service that go up to 15 miles. They can also back hall off of existing towers to provide service.

- **Will Hub 66 negotiate with GMP, who owns most polls in Southern Vermont, to install equipment?** They try to stay away from utility poles due to high costs. It can be 3-4 times more costly to have line men work above power lines. The best thing to do is to use the road right of way on the opposite side of the road. It is inexpensive to have a utility pole put in.
- **If you're installing the poles across the road, do you meet the power requirements for the gear?** Likely, they'll just pull a line from the utility pole across the street. **So the utility company will have to run a line across the road to the pole?** Yes, another option are light poles. There are a lot of micro pop technologies that are able to make use of the power provided by light poles. **How big is your company and how old are you?** July of 2019 Hub 66 filed as a corporation, a privately owned company with investors that supports the idea that everyone should have access to internet services.
- **When your line is run by my house and you have service, do you become my DSL provider?** No, we did not do DSL. We use Fiber or a wireless connection, and we would be your provider. It is an \$89.00 /month charge for up to 1 gig of service. For special cases the cost differs. Such an example would be for a home that was 5 miles outside of town, we would work with them to get them the services they need. We would do a shared install cost with them such as \$1000.00, and their monthly bill would be a bit higher.
- **Are there any limits to monthly usage?** No
- **How do you handle support? Up here in Vermont, the weather is lousy a lot, if something happens, how is that dealt with?** We are partnered with a couple of people that handle that for us. First Light runs fiber to the home for us and their response time is great. They also handle residential fiber replacement for us in New England and New York State. They also have a tower climbing crew on reserve all the time. They keep extra equipment and crews on hand to deal with issues that arise. In most cases, they try to respond to issues within 6 hours.
- **What about towns that are mountainous and have next to no fiber?** That is why we use a hybrid solution. A lot of times they will install fiber down Main Streets, and then run fiber to a tower that is able to provide at least 10 gigs. Then they can broadcast the signal to homes around the mountain. They would pick certain points in the area to broadcast signals in and out in order to provide services. Four Towns such as Goshen they would provide a map overlay consisting of what they could do to provide services.

Amanda made a motion to go into executive session to discuss contracts and private information related to contracts. Sam seconded the motion, the motion passed. No action taken after executive session.

- **RFPs for legal services and website design:** we are currently looking at contracts. We have awarded Group 6, the website and logo contract. We awarded PPEC, the legal

contract. Risi was initially at least in theory, awarded a contract for the development of a pre enrollment platform. We are having to make sure all contractual language reflects the Cares Act grant requirements. Which will give us a better stand on putting a bid out for an ISP (Internet service provider). The states consultants need to make sure that the program specifically services the needs of those who need to access Telehealth, education, and professional support in terms of having to work from home and connectivity.

- Amanda will come up with a marketing and outreach plan in support of our grant amendment which allows us to have those funds allocated for that pre enrollment deliverable.
- The CUD may have to apply for another grant amendment to make sure all funds are correctly earmarked. Additional funds of up to \$300,000 may be necessary.
- The Department of Public Service has asked if there is anything that can be done to help the Chittenden Grange Hall. Due to the fact that they have such a hard time getting reliable service. Consolidated Communications may be of help with this project. A possible hotspot could be of use if we can run a line to the Grange Hall.
- The RPC has been working with the region's Emergency Management directors to see if there are areas that could use additional hotspots for community connectivity. We've applied for 13 and have received 12 locations that were awarded. The CUD is funding to purchase of tech and installation of the hot spots. An email will be sent out listing all of the locations. There are 1 or 2 in Pittsford, Mt Holly, Poultney, Pollet, West Rutland, Bensen, Sudbury...
 - Is Goshen able to receive a hot spot? There is a week or so where the CUD is able to establish a site in Addison County.
 - There may be a few locations in Castleton that can benefit from hot spots.
 - Hubbardton said they would not be able to benefit from a hot spot.
- **Contract Updates:** have been previously discussed
 - Updates will be sent out as soon as contracts are signed.
- **Grant Updates:** The CUD has applied for another \$20,000 grant from the Vermont Community Foundation.
- **Website Development:** previously discussed
- **RISI Updates:** The feasibility study updates will be coming soon. They have asked to attend our next meeting. The feasibility study will clearly outline our optimal growth strategy.
- **Potential Clerk position:** Is currently being done by the RPC. Amanda will be working on this. By December we hope to have a better standing on the clerk position and installment.
- **First Light:** Communication of the obtaining of information from them has been difficult. They are not as willing to work with us as we had thought they would be.
- Consolidated Communications may eventually be an option. They are currently drafting up with their 2020/2021 plan that will commence in January and some of the work planning will take place in our CUD in the Rutland county region. No specificity at this point.

- Consolidated Communications has not been a reliable source as an internet provider in the town of Goshen, so this is a worry.
- Some legislation has been brought forth to give Consolidated communications and comcast a push to provide more/ better services.
- **Emergency hotspot deployment:** Hot spots were previously discussed. But if members are able to find locations that are viable they need to be made known as soon as possible.
- **VCUDA:** There hasn't been a meeting and not updates are available.
- **New member recruitment is important. The more towns we join with, the more influence we have to get connectivity to the home and beyond.**
 - We should check with the town of Whiting to see if they want to join our CUD or Addison county?
- **The next meeting will be set via email.**
- Amanda made a motion to adjourn and Chris seconded the motion. The motion passed.