

1 **NRPC Board of Commissioners Meeting**  
2 **March 30<sup>th</sup>, 2022**  
3 **Virtual Meeting**  
4

5 The meeting of the Board of Commissioners was held using the Zoom platform.  
6

7 **Attendance**

8 Commissioners: See attached. A quorum was present to conduct business.

9 Staff : C. Dimitruk, D. Pierce, D. Devlin

10 Guests: Sean Kio, NW Fiberworx  
11

12 Chair B. Irwin welcomed attendees and called the meeting to order at 7:01 PM.  
13

14 **Adjustments to the Agenda**

15 There are no adjustments to the agenda.  
16

17 **Welcome, introductions, opening remarks**

18 B. Irwin welcomed those attending. Participants briefly introduced themselves.  
19

20 **Opportunity for Public Comment**

21 No members of the public offered comments.  
22

23 **Minutes of the February Meeting**

24 *M. Sholten moved to approve the February minutes as written, and E. Nance seconded. There was brief*  
25 *discussion.*  
26

27 In support of the Commission's work on diversity, equity, and inclusion matters, B. Irwin encouraged  
28 members to reflect on the two questions included at the top of page two of the minutes (ethical  
29 performance, vision for the future).  
30

31 *Motion carried with two abstentions (H Garrett and H. Demars).*  
32

33 **Presentation/Discussion: Sean Kio, NW Fiberworx**  
34

35 B. Irwin introduced S. Kio, who previously was a member of the Commission. S. Kio is the Executive  
36 Director of the local Communications Union District (CUD) known by the name NW Fiberworx (NWFX).  
37

38 S. Kio made a brief presentation. He explained NWFX believes it can facilitate "Generational Change."  
39 It has identified several goals, many of the which would address the fact that 27% of premises in the  
40 CUD's area do not have adequate connectivity for today's standards. All area towns have been invited  
41 to participate and can join the CUD. NWFX plans to build, own, and maintain an optical fiber based  
42 open-access network, which will spur competition and lower costs for consumers. Compared to services  
43 like Starlink, NWFX's services would be faster and less expensive. Implementation of the NWFX  
44 network will take place in 7 or 8 phases over 36 months. Workforce availability and supply chain for  
45 materials are potential bottlenecks and could affect that schedule. The project will be funded by a  
46 combination of state and federal grants, commercial loans, and revenue bonding. Municipalities will not  
47 pay additional taxes as a result of the CUD. There will however be a significant positive economic

1 impact. In closing his presentation, S. Kio noted that those interested in helping launch the network can  
2 do so by “spreading the word,” and by becoming involved with the CUD board.

3  
4 In response to questions, S. Kio noted the expected lifespan of the fiber being planned is 50 years, if not  
5 more. The largest potential challenges to meeting the planned schedule are construction labor,  
6 materials, and supply chain. Electric utilities were approached about being partners in offering internet  
7 services but they could not make a business case to establish such services. They may be involved in  
8 certain maintenance activities.

9  
10 The rough cost of the network is \$70 million, which would serve a population of 29000. Some \$40  
11 million of grant funds are already available to the CUD. Remaining funding will be in the form of loans  
12 and bonding. NFWX anticipates having guaranteed revenue (from Google) from fees paid by ISPs. E.  
13 Nance commented she is a member of the CUD board and very excited the difference having the service  
14 will make to people in the region.

15  
16 In concluding his presentation, S. Kio noted that there are other CUDs with similar goals, but different  
17 regions have different challenges. NFWX believed strongly in the open access model and was able to  
18 take advantage of opportunities. B. Irwin thanked S. Kio and wished S. Kio and the NFWX continued  
19 success. Thanks were returned by S Kio for extensive support provided by NRPC. C. Dimitruk noted the  
20 CUD is quickly becoming independent; she added it was great to provide support to such an important  
21 effort. B. Irwin referred to NRPC’s role as being an “incubator.”

## 22 23 **Commission Reports:**

24  
25 **Finance/Operations**—H. Garrett noted the committee did not meet this month. The meeting packet  
26 includes a profit and loss statement and a balance sheet. H. Garrett then posed questions relating to  
27 revenues. He asked about Healthy Roots (where 90% of expected revenues have been received in four  
28 months), other state grants, and miscellaneous income. Next, H. Garrett posed a question relating to  
29 expenses (specifically insurance rates, which C. Dimitruk explained went up more than had been  
30 anticipated). Turning to the balance sheet, H. Garret asked for clarifications regarding NW Vermont  
31 Region Foundation (the RPC’s non profit), Undeposited funds, Payroll liabilities, and accrued vacations.  
32 *Commissioners did not have any other questions.*

33  
34 **Personnel** – L. Ruple stated that the Committee did not meet.

35  
36 **Executive Committee** – B. Irwin stated that the Committee met and has an action agenda item later in  
37 the meeting. He mentioned the Committee’s discussion at its last meeting included the NRPC’s  
38 involvement in a brownfields project relating to the former National Guard Armory in Enosburgh.

39  
40 **Project Review** – B. Buermann stated that the Committee had conducted reviews of a solar project  
41 (previously discussed and generating limited questions), a proposal for additional hangars at the  
42 Highgate State Airport (the Committee hopes to invite a representative of the airport to address the full  
43 range of projects being planned), Alburg Golf links “gravel pit” (used for their own activities) and a  
44 communications tower in Enosburgh near the boundary with Fairfield and Bakersfield (where the  
45 Committee is encouraging coordination with residents in surrounding communities).

46  
47 **Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC)** – H. Garret noted the TAC met on March 10. The focus of the  
48 meeting was prioritization of potential bridge projects. The TAC and staff are reaching out to

1 municipalities to obtain input and identify any bridges previously missed. B. Morris noted the TAC will  
2 continue to refine its recommendations over the next two meetings. Recommendations to VTTrans must  
3 be submitted in May.

4  
5 **Energy Committee-** B. Buermann noted the Committee has not met yet. Staff is working with members  
6 to establish a meeting date.

7  
8 **Brownfields Committee** – C. Dimitruk stated the Brownfields Committee continues to have an opening  
9 for a Commission representative. For those who might be interested, the Committee typically meets  
10 during the day. C. Dimitruk also mentioned that Brownfield funding overseen by the Committee will be  
11 used at the Enosburgh Armory site. On a related note E. Nance mentioned planned work at the former  
12 Riviere Hotel site in Swanton, which is being cleared for future development. C. Dimitruk stated  
13 Brownfield funds have been provided for that location.

14  
15 **Regional Plan and Policy Committee-** E. Nance stated that the Committee has been discussing the RPC's  
16 Diversity Equity and Inclusion efforts issues. On April 11, the committee will formalize a timeline and  
17 public outreach plan. There is hope work on the Plan will begin in May or June.

18  
19 **Vermont Economic Progress Council (VEPC)** – C. Dimitruk indicated that, per the Committee report in  
20 the packet, a project applied to VEPC for tax credits. E. Nance mentioned attending the VEPC meeting  
21 relating to Beta Technology's application for Vermont Employment Growth Incentive (VEGI) funding. The  
22 applicant was informed about the likely amount of funding they will receive if the application moves  
23 forward. E. Nance also mentioned permitting issues Beta Technology is facing in South Burlington. The  
24 company is indicating they will expand in Plattsburgh if the issues are not resolved.

25  
26 **Green Mountain Transit (GMT)-** B. Buermann stated that, after three years of effort, all contracts with  
27 unions have been signed. He also mentioned the recent news article about GMT's proposed cuts in  
28 service stemming from budget issues. The proposed changes do not affect the Northwest Region. As a  
29 member of the GMT board he is trying to emphasize the importance of transit for social services,  
30 employment, accessibility for seniors, etc. C. Dimitruk mentioned that B. Buermann was a board  
31 representative in negotiations involving service in rural areas. His participation was crucial in helping  
32 parties reach agreement and avoiding the planned strike.

33  
34 **Healthy Roots Advisory Committee-** L. Douglas mentioned two new reports are now in circulation.  
35 There is a lot of good work being done by a very small staff. Healthy Roots plays a significant role in  
36 helping address food insecurity in our region.

37  
38 **Northwest Vermont Regional Foundation-** B. Irwin noted that there was brief discussion of the  
39 Foundation at the most recent Board meeting. Action was limited to installation of officers.

40  
41 **Office-** C. Dimitruk mentioned NRPC will soon issue an RFP relating to the Working Community  
42 Challenge initiative. The RFP will seek a consultant to complete a housing needs analysis. C. Dimitruk  
43 also mentioned NRPC, LCPC, and NVDA will jointly file an application for a significant bike and  
44 pedestrian grant effort. The application will seek between \$500k and \$1 million from the US Department  
45 of Transportation's Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) grant  
46 program. No funding match is required by the program. B. Morris asked if the application would  
47 encompass exiting rail trails. C. Dimitruk indicated yes, as well as other community connections. D.  
48 Pierce mentioned that the two Basin Water Quality Councils (BWQCs) being formed with the assistance

1 of NRPC each had their organization meetings recently. In response to a question from B. Buermann, D.  
2 Pierce added that he and C. Dimitruk also took part in a the organizational meeting of the BWQC for the  
3 northern Lake Champlain basin. He will provide reports on those activities in the future.

4  
5 **Statement of Inclusion:**

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7 B. Irwin introduced the topic and referenced the material in the packet, which took inspiration from  
8 statements developed by other organizations. A draft tailored to NRPC and its region was carefully  
9 reviewed by the Executive Board. B. Irwin read the statement and asked the members if they wished to  
10 proceed with its adoption.

11  
12 *B. Morris moved approval of the statement, with M. Scholten seconding. Discussion followed.*

13  
14 B. Irwin noted the Executive Committee learned much while preparing the statement and is happy to  
15 present it the Board for consideration. C. Dimitruk added she appreciated having it read aloud, which  
16 reinforced its positive qualities. B. Buermann emphasized how much effort the board members made  
17 when finalizing the text. He is happy to see the support of the Board being expressed.

18  
19 *The motion carried unanimously.*

20  
21 **Commissioners Announcements:**

22  
23 C. Dimitruk acknowledged the contribution made by Dea Devlin, who prepared an initial draft of the  
24 Statement of inclusion. Andy Alling expressed thanks to Greta Brusnwick and Emily Kloft for help they  
25 are providing in South Hero, which is revising its zoning regulations. Y. Dandurand noted that as of  
26 Friday, it will be possible to cross the border with Canada without COVID testing. E. Nance announced  
27 Swanton received word hours earlier that it had received a VTRans Transportation Alternatives grant.  
28 The grant will fund a scoping study to improve safety in Swanton Village.

29  
30 **Adjourn:**

31 *H. Demars moved to adjourn, with R. Noel seconding. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting*  
32 *adjourned at 8:29 PM.*