

**MINUTES**  
**SELECT BOARD MEETING**  
**TOWN OF COVENTRY**  
**MONDAY DECEMBER 16<sup>th</sup>, 2019 AT 4:30 P.M.**

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**Board Members Present:**

Mike Marcotte / Chair; Scott Briere; David Gallup

**Town Officials Present:**

Amanda Carlson / Town Administrator

David Barlow / Treasurer

Kate Fletcher / Assessing Clerk & Delinquent Tax Collector

Phil Marquette / Planning Commission Member

**Guests:**

Katherine Sims

Martha Sylvester; Rory Merritt, Joi Merritt

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- 1. Chair Mike Marcotte called the meeting to order at 4:30 p.m.**
- 2. Approve the minutes of the December 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2019 Meeting.**
  - Scott Briere made the motion to approve the minutes of the December 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2019 meeting as written. Seconded by Mike Marcotte and signed and approved by the Board quorum.
- 3. Allow for Public Comment**
  - Kate Fletcher stated her appreciation and recognition of the work done to decorate for the holidays by David Gallup putting up lights in Lady Bird Park; and, Martha Sylvester and Rory Merritt for decorating and hosting the tree lighting event on Sunday.

#### **4. Katherine Sims, NEK Collaborative – Presentation on Regional Opportunities to Advance Broadband Connections**

- Katherine Sims explained her work and goals to bring affordable high-speed internet to the area; stating that broadband is now an essential part of connecting communities and part of today's lifestyle.
- Katherine asked the Board to consider asking the voters to become part of a new Communication Union District (CUD) which would be a separate municipal entity dedicated to finding solutions to broadband connectivity.
- *Informational handout attached.*
- Katherine explained that once the new CUD is formed, a business plan will be created to understand the best and most affordable way to proceed.
- With no financial commitment from the Town, the Board unanimously agreed to include the question of joining the Communications Union District on the 2020 Town Meeting Warning for voter consideration.

#### **5. Road Discontinuance – Review Letter from Town Attorney for Issuance**

- Item tabled; notices not received.

#### **6. Village Church Building Update**

- Working with the Church members, David Barlow provided the Board with an update on the Village Church building.
- The known remaining members of the church were invited to a meeting on Wednesday December 11, 2019 where 4 of the 7 attended.
- David stated that there were no decisions made, and the meeting had been suspended pending answers to questions posed to the Attorney believed to be working on the deed transfer with the late Dr. Feltmarch.
- Once the questions are answered, David Barlow stated that he would bring information back to the Board in early January for further discussion.
- David Gallup stated his concern that with necessary structural repairs to the Church building, that if the decisions were left too long then another construction season would be lost.

#### **7. Treasurer Report of Financials for Preceding Month**

- Treasurer David Barlow reviewed the financial summary for November 2019.
- The Board discussed the Edmund Douglas Price endowment fund that was gifted to the Town in the form of Microsoft shares.
- David stated that the Town had not held up to the agreement in managing the funds and this should be discussed when reviewing the FY21 budget.

## **8. Discussion and Review of Draft FY21 Budget**

- Item tabled for discussion at the next meeting.

## **9. Other Business**

- Mike Marcotte stated he had attended a Coventry Fire District Meeting and based on information presented, suggested the Board meet with the CFD and the Select Board Bookkeeper to discuss.
- The Board unanimously agreed to hold a special meeting on Thursday December 19<sup>th</sup>, 2019 at 4:30 p.m. for discussion with the Select Board Bookkeeper regarding the Shared Services Contract with the Coventry Fire District.

10. Sign Orders

**ACCOUNTS PAYABLE ~ GENERAL FUND**

Prior Warrant ending check #: 18839

CHECK #	WARRANT	ORDERS	CHECK DATE	AMOUNT
18840-18850	20-20	ACCOUNTS PAYABLE - GEN - TAX CREDITS	12/4/2019	\$2,124.72
ACH	P20-24	PAYROLL - PE 12/09	12/9/2019	\$2,403.16
ACH	F12-09	ACCOUNTS PAYABLE - IRS PE 12/09	12/9/2019	\$1,012.88
ACH	S12-09	ACCOUNTS PAYABLE - VT PE 12/09	12/9/2019	\$145.77
18851	P20-24	PAYROLL - PE 12/09	12/9/2019	\$725.29
18852	P20-24A	PAYROLL - PE 12/10	12/10/2019	\$656.63
ACH	F12-10	ACCOUNTS PAYABLE - IRS PE 12/10	12/10/2019	\$183.71
ACH	S12-10	ACCOUNTS PAYABLE - VT PE 12/10	12/10/2019	\$20.86
ACH	P20-25	PAYROLL - PE 12/16	12/16/2019	\$3,932.13
ACH	F12-16	ACCOUNTS PAYABLE - IRS PE 12/16	12/16/2019	\$1,661.88
ACH	S12-16	ACCOUNTS PAYABLE - VT PE 12/16	12/16/2019	\$241.85
18853	P20-25	PAYROLL - PE 12/16	12/16/2019	\$725.29
18854-18882	20-21	ACCOUNTS PAYABLE - GEN	12/16/2019	\$22,981.48
		<b>TOTAL ORDERS</b>		<b><u>\$36,815.65</u></b>
<b>BUILDING &amp; MAINTENANCE RESTRICTED FUNDS TRANSFERS</b>				
CHECK #		ORDERS	CHECK DATE	FY20 AMOUNT
BANK CHECK		J&S ELECTRICAL	12/16/2019	\$ 397.00
		<b>TOTAL ORDERS</b>		<b><u>\$ 397.00</u></b>
<b>REAPPRAISAL RESTRICTED FUNDS TRANSFERS</b>				
CHECK #		ORDERS	CHECK DATE	FY20 AMOUNT
BANK CHECK		MONAGHAN SAFAR DUCHAM	12/16/2019	\$ 594.00
		<b>TOTAL ORDERS</b>		<b><u>\$ 594.00</u></b>
<b>FLOOD MITIGATION RESTRICTED FUNDS TRANSFERS</b>				
CHECK #		ORDERS	CHECK DATE	FY20 AMOUNT
BANK CHECK		CALKINS SAND & GRAVEL	12/16/2019	\$ 4,603.26
		<b>TOTAL ORDERS</b>		<b><u>\$ 4,603.26</u></b>

11. Adjourn

**Meeting Adjourned at 5:38 p.m.**

**The next Select Board meeting will be held on Thursday December 19<sup>th</sup>, 2019 at 4:30 p.m.**

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**Michael Marcotte / Chairman**

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**Scott Briere**

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**David Gallup**

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**Amanda Carlson / Town Administrator**

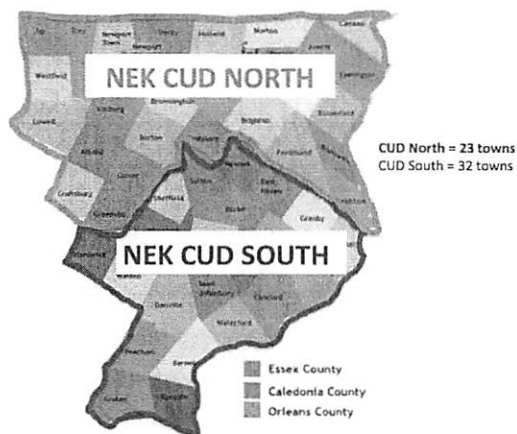
## NEK Community Fiber - Increasing Broadband Access in the Northeast Kingdom

**NEK Broadband Goal** - Today, fast, reliable and affordable internet is as much a necessity as electricity. Our region is falling behind (see next page for town level data). NEK Community Fiber seeks to ensure every E911 business and residential address in the NEK has access to a minimum speed of 100 Mbps, symmetrical at an affordable price.

**Forming a Communication Union District** - A Communication Union District (CUD) is a municipal entity, made up of 2 or more towns, with the specific purpose to build, maintain, and operate broadband infrastructure in order to provide high speed internet to all residents in member communities. Membership in a CUD poses no financial risk to the town or individual taxpayers. Any and all costs associated with the investment in communications infrastructure are not borne by the taxpayers of district members. All towns that approve that approve this ballot measure will become members of the CUD and each member town must appoint a representative to the CUD board of directors.

In order to join a CUD, voters must approve the following language at town meeting or a special meeting: *"Shall the Town of [insert municipality] enter into a communications union district (CUD) to be known as NEK Community Fiber, under the provisions of 30 V.S.A. Ch82?"*

**NEK Community Fiber Districts** - In order to serve every town in the NEK, efforts are underway to establish two CUDs to serve the region: NEK Community Fiber North & NEK Community Fiber South.



### Next steps for towns:

1. Appoint town resident to CUD working group
2. Add CUD ballot measure to town warning for vote on town meeting day
3. Conduct community outreach & education
4. Conduct vote on town meeting day

## Connectivity in NEK by Town

County	Town	Total Buildings	% Served 100/100 or Better	% Served 25/3 or Better	% Served 10/1 or Better	% Served 4/1 or Better	% Underserved
Caledonia	Barnet	1015	0%	19%	56%	78%	21%
Caledonia	Burke	1004	0%	54%	58%	68%	31%
Caledonia	Danville	1421	0%	54%	57%	68%	31%
Caledonia	Groton	705	0%	26%	81%	82%	17%
Caledonia	Hardwick	1426	1%	67%	71%	99%	0%
Caledonia	Kirby	274	0%	10%	19%	37%	62%
Caledonia	Lyndon	2277	0%	82%	83%	87%	12%
Caledonia	Newark	597	0%	0%	11%	49%	50%
Caledonia	Peacham	568	0%	51%	79%	81%	18%
Caledonia	Ryegate	674	0%	36%	79%	82%	17%
Caledonia	Sheffield	468	0%	23%	42%	68%	31%
Caledonia	St. Johnsbury	2890	0%	85%	88%	94%	5%
Caledonia	Stannard	141	0%	0%	14%	97%	2%
Caledonia	Sutton	487	0%	22%	28%	53%	46%
Caledonia	Walden	657	0%	12%	56%	94%	5%
Caledonia	Waterford	650	0%	16%	36%	72%	27%
Caledonia	Wheelock	500	0%	11%	32%	70%	29%
Essex	Averill	245	0%	0%	0%	8%	91%
Essex	Averys Gore	8	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%
Essex	Bloomfield	236	0%	0%	24%	69%	30%
Essex	Brighton	930	0%	63%	65%	87%	12%
Essex	Brunswick	76	0%	0%	9%	30%	69%
Essex	Canaan	621	45%	44%	59%	79%	20%
Essex	Concord	889	0%	29%	51%	79%	20%
Essex	East Haven	214	0%	0%	38%	64%	35%
Essex	Ferdinand	77	0%	0%	3%	18%	81%
Essex	Granby	101	0%	0%	35%	66%	33%
Essex	Guildhall	183	0%	0%	28%	75%	24%
Essex	Lemington	91	33%	32%	32%	62%	37%
Essex	Lewis	47	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%
Essex	Lunenburg	886	0%	0%	44%	75%	24%
Essex	Maidstone	360	0%	0%	19%	69%	30%
Essex	Norton	221	0%	0%	23%	77%	22%
Essex	Victory	102	0%	0%	12%	69%	30%
Essex	Warners Grant	2	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%

Essex	Warren Gore	59	0%	0%	0%	13%	86%
Orleans	Albany	615	3%	3%	46%	91%	8%
Orleans	Barton	1478	0%	63%	67%	93%	6%
Orleans	Brownington	558	0%	58%	78%	94%	5%
Orleans	Charleston	768	0%	59%	65%	91%	8%
Orleans	Coventry	531	0%	45%	54%	82%	17%
Orleans	Craftsbury	720	8%	8%	29%	92%	7%
Orleans	Derby	2473	0%	77%	83%	91%	8%
Orleans	Glover	806	0%	14%	46%	85%	14%
Orleans	Greensboro	824	1%	9%	43%	94%	5%
Orleans	Holland	458	0%	1%	29%	75%	24%
Orleans	Irasburg	628	0%	28%	39%	84%	15%
Orleans	Jay	538	0%	63%	63%	66%	33%
Orleans	Lowell	556	0%	0%	32%	68%	31%
Orleans	Morgan	809	0%	65%	72%	90%	9%
Orleans	Newport City	1879	0%	98%	99%	99%	0%
Orleans	Newport Town	865	0%	47%	55%	86%	13%
Orleans	Troy	879	0%	77%	81%	90%	9%
Orleans	Westfield	375	0%	32%	48%	68%	32%
Orleans	Westmore	590	0%	0%	27%	92%	7%

Source: [publicservice.vermont.gov](http://publicservice.vermont.gov)

### CUD Frequently Asked Questions

- What is the cost to the taxpayer and town?
  - The taxpayer and town are not required to pay anything to be a part of the communications union district. A CUD may ask the town to provide space for a communications plant used to store fiber optic cable, electronics and other assets required to operate the towns network.
- Is the taxpayer or town liable if the CUD goes belly up?
  - The state statute (specifically - § 3056. Limitations; taxes; indebtedness and § 3083. Dissolution) make it quite clear that the taxpayer and towns may not be held liable in anyway for the debts of the CUD.
  - All fiber assets and built infrastructure of the CUD are liable to seizure.
- How does a town join the CUD?
  - A town can join a CUD in two ways:
    - The initial CUD must be established through a town meeting day vote, where all initial member towns vote to form municipality.



- After initial CUD is formed a member town can be added through a selectboard vote or another town meeting day vote
- Can a town withdraw from the CUD?
  - A town can withdraw through the same mean in which they joined the CUD (i.e a town meeting day vote or selectboard vote if the town joined after the CUD was initially formed.). I
  - All assets in town that are built by the CUD remain an asset of the CUD though customers with in that town can still receive internet services.
- Where can I learn more about the CUD?
  - The full text of the state statute is available here:  
<https://legislature.vermont.gov/statutes/chapter/30/082>
- How many towns are in the NEK Community Fiber CUD?
  - We're aiming to have 22 or so towns, which would include all towns in Caledonia County and southern Essex county. Their is another group working simultaneously on a CUD for Orleans and northern Essex county.

**For more information, contact:**

- Northeast Kingdom Collaborative: Katherine Sims, [Katherine@nekcollaborative.org](mailto:Katherine@nekcollaborative.org)
- Northeastern Vermont Development Association: David Snedeker, [dsnedeker@nvda.net](mailto:dsnedeker@nvda.net)
- CUD South - Evan Carlson, [evan@hjalmarcarlson.com](mailto:evan@hjalmarcarlson.com)