

Southern Vermont Communications Union District

d/b/a Catamount Fiber

## Annual Report

Draft: 21 October 2020

### 2020: Our First Year

Southern Vermont Communications Union District (SoVT CUD) was voted into existence in March 2019 by 12 towns in Bennington County. In less than a year we have:

- Received grants totaling \$170,000, plus \$12,000 received by Bennington County Regional Commission (BCRC) to support our efforts,
- Embarked on a utility pole survey to lay the groundwork for fiber optic network construction,
- Entered into a teaming agreement with Tilson, a network technology company, Green Mountain Power (GMP), and others to seek federal grants for rural broadband.

Starting from scratch and run by volunteers, we are proud of what we have accomplished.

Our first order of business upon formation was to elect officers. The SoVT CUD governing board is ably lead by:

- Chair, Tim Scoggins. Before retiring, Tim was an engineering-scientist and project manager for Applied Research Laboratories doing research in underwater acoustics for the Navy.
- Vice-chair, Sheila Kearns. Sheila is a retired State of Vermont Information Technology Manager whose experience includes the management of fiber deployment to Vermont public libraries.
- Treasurer, Bill Fisk. Bill is an attorney and certified public accountant whose work includes wealth transfer, and forming and governing business and non-profit organizations.
- Clerk, Bill Meyer. Bill is a Professor Emeritus of Biochemistry at the University of Vermont College of Medicine.

Our “executive committee” also include Jonathan Cooper, economic development specialist at BCRC.

In June 2020 we received a \$60,000 Broadband Innovation Grant (BIG) from the state of Vermont to undertake a feasibility study of building a fiber optic network in Bennington County. Preliminary results from that study suggest we need to grow in size and merge or collaborate with the also newly formed Deerfield Valley CUD in Windham County. Such a collaboration has been in the minds of people in both counties from inception and we are currently moving apace to formalize that collaboration.

In September we received a \$100,000 COVID relief grant to accelerate our network deployment plans. That was used to conduct a utility pole survey in our most under-served towns, Sandgate, Rupert, Peru, Dorset. A pole survey is a necessary first step toward network design and construction. Each pole we intend to hang fiber on must be evaluated in several measures, such as:

- Does the pole need replacement or reinforcement?
- Will other telecom lines need to be moved to accommodate ours?
- Is the pole in a favorable position to branch to a residence?

COVID relief money has allowed us to start early the design work for fiber optic network construction.

The Vermont Community Foundation (VCF) donated \$10,000 to SoVT CUD and the other CUDs for operating expenses. This money was sorely needed and greatly appreciated. Previously, SoVT CUD volunteers who had been giving so generously of their time were also giving their money for basic operating expenses like teleconferencing software and filing fees. In October we received notice that VCF intends to give us another \$20,000. Many thanks to VCF.

As the year ends, we look forward to building upon our relationship with Deerfield Valley CUD. Both sides agree that our prospects are improved by working together.

The FCC is granting \$16B this fall in its Rural Digital Opportunity Fund (RDOF). Many players appear to be bidding for grants in our area and the results will shape the landscape in which we work. We will be watching developments carefully through the fall and winter.

We continue to explore public/private partnerships as a vehicle to solving the rural broadband problem in our region.

All the representatives, alternates, and officers of SoVT CUD have given mightily to this effort and deserve respect and gratitude. They have made for an impressive first year.

BUDGET

FY20\* (1 Oct 2019 - 30 Sep 2020)

FY21 (1 Oct 2020 - 30 Sep 2021)

Revenues	Forecast	Actual
BIG Grant		\$60,000
COVID Grant		\$100,000
VCF Grant		\$10,000
Donation Bill Fisk		\$50
	Total	<u>\$170,050</u>

Revenues	Forecast
BIG Grant	\$0
COVID Grant	\$10,000
VCF Grant	\$20,000
Donation Bill Fisk	\$0
	Total <u>\$30,000</u>

Expenses	Forecast	Actual
gotomeeting.com		\$25
zoom.us		\$119
Trade name		\$50
Bank charges		\$126
Pole survey		\$100,000
BIG feasibility study		\$30,000
	Total	<u>\$130,320</u>

Expenses	Forecast
gotomeeting.com	\$0
zoom.us	\$840
Trade name	\$0
Bank charges	\$100
Pole survey	\$0
BIG business plan (w/ DV)	\$30,000
Insurance	\$1,500
Legal services	\$2,500
Consulting	\$5,000
Marketing, website	\$2,500
Misc operating expenses	\$2,000
	Total <u>\$44,440</u>

Revenue - Expenses (under) \$39,730

Revenue - Expenses (under) (\$14,440)

\*SoVT CUD formed 3 March 2020

Southern Vermont Communications Union District (SoVT CUD)  
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Financial Statement  
30-Sep-2020

ASSETS

Current assets

Restricted cash	\$9,828.53
COVID Grant	\$100,000.00
BIG grant receivable	\$60,000.00
Total current assets	<u>\$169,828.53</u>

Other assets

Trade name	\$50.00
Total other assets	<u>\$50.00</u>

TOTAL ASSETS \$169,878.53

LIABILITIES AND NET FUND POSITION

Current liabilities

Deferred grant revenue	
COVID grant	\$100,000.00
BIG grant	\$60,000.00
VCF grant	\$9,828.53
Total current liabilities	<u><u>\$169,828.53</u></u>

Net Fund Position

Invested in trade name	\$50.00
Total net fund position	<u>\$50.00</u>

TOTAL LIABILITIES AND NET FUND POSITIOI \$169,878.53

**SoVT CUD Towns, Representatives, Alternates**

Town	Rep	Alt 1	Alt 2
Arlington	Cynthia Browning	Matt Bykowski	
Bennington	Eric Hatch	Ron Dubreuil	Beth Hardesty
Dorset	Mike Chase	Jim Salsgiver	Mike Oltedal
Landgrove	Jim Swartzentruber		
Manchester	Terrence Dorsey	Kathleen James	
Pownal	Caitlin Randall	Karlan Eberhardt	
Peru	Alex Sheets	Peter Bradford	
Rupert	Bill Meyer	Jed Ruben	Charlese Rockwell
Sandgate	Sheila Kearns	Betsy Rathbun-Gunn	
Shaftsbury	Tim Scoggins	Michael Corey	James Salerno
Sunderland	Mark Hyde	Andrew McKeever	
Woodford	Michael Charette		