



## **Board of Directors Special Meeting Minutes**

September 24, 2019

### **Board of Directors:**

	Vacant, Barton		Vacant, Ludlow
	Jonathan Elwell, Enosburg	<b>X</b>	Bill Humphrey, Lyndonville
	Mike Sullivan, Hardwick		Craig Myotte, Morrisville
	Carol Robertson, Hyde Park	<b>X</b>	Stephen Fitzhugh, Northfield
	Pamela Moore, Jacksonville	<b>X</b>	John Morley, Orleans
	Meredith Birkett, Johnson	<b>X</b>	Reginald Beliveau, Swanton

*X indicates attendance in person, P indicates attendance by phone.*

### **Alternates present:**

Lynn Paradis, Swanton	Penny Jones, Morrisville
Tin Barton-Caplin	

### **Others present:**

Ken Nolan, VPPSA	Crystal Currier, VPPSA	Amy Parah, VPPSA
Thomas Petraska, Ludlow	Tim Blodgett, Hometown Connections	

### **Numbers in bold type correspond with agenda item numbers:**

- 1.** The meeting was called to order at 9:20 a.m. at Burlington Electric Department's Spark Space located at 595 Pine Street, Burlington, Vermont.
- 2.** Chairman Beliveau asked if there were requests for changes and/or modifications to the current agenda. There were no changes.
- 3.** Chairman Beliveau asked if there were public comments and/or individuals who would like to address the Board. There was no public in attendance.
- 4.** Chairman Beliveau requested the group go around the table for introductions. Following introductions, the General Manager started with a brief slideshow that provided a brief overview of the topics to set the context for further discussion.

*External pressures* - discussions with the state regulators and legislators, as well as customer comments were highlighted. Questions are being raised in various quarters about how to expand municipal services to meet the challenges of the changing utility landscape, and whether VPPSA



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can or should play a greater role in meeting these challenges. It was noted that certain legislators have asked if there are any incentives that could be provided legislatively to promote better coordination among municipal utilities.

**Internal Pressures** – the General Manager identified several internal challenges faced by member utilities, including difficulty finding qualified staff, pressures on the public power business model, and difficulties with obtaining economies of scale in implementing new technologies. Other concerns that interfere with VPPSA’s ability to provide additional projects and/or services were also highlighted. These include matters such as, the ability to obtain member’s customer information, member participation related to VPPSA staff requests and the lack of specialized staff that can support specific new services.

**APPA Survey** – APPA produces an annual survey of services that are provided by Joint Action Agencies around the country. The General Manager reviewed the top services that are provided by Joint Action Agencies and those services that are offered by VPPSA were highlighted.

**The Boundaries** – Discussions with legal counsel have indicated that VPPSA has a broad range of capabilities. VPPSA can own assets and it can provide services to members (including the operation of a utility and ancillary services); however, VPPSA cannot sell energy to retail customers within Vermont. A brief review of the current services that VPPSA offers was provided.

**Specific Thoughts** - Specific projects that have been requested by the VPPSA members include: mapping (mPower), AMI, central net metering calculations, engineering support and temporary staffing. Specific staff projects that have been considered include: expanded central billing, central purchases/loans, expanded IT/Cyber support and RES Tier III projects.

The General Manager indicated that questions for today’s discussion include: 1) how far does VPPSA go before the members are uncomfortable, 2) are there specific new programs where centralization through VPPSA is desired, 3) what ways should VPPSA help to address the identified internal pressures, and 4) should public power react to the external pressures and if so, what is VPPSA’s role?

The Board discussed a number of topics including: the value of public power, economies of scale, operations management, local control, the aging workforce and the ability to obtain quality employees. Mr Blodgett brought the discussion back to two basic questions: 1) from a Joint Action Agency’s prospective, what are the economies of scale (the number of members that must participate in any given activity) and 2) what are the top priorities that VPPSA should focus on?

Mr. Blodgett provided an example of the Missouri River Energy Services model and how they consolidate services for their members. After further discussion, the top priorities that were identified include: mapping services (mPower), technical services in general, IT management, effective management, trained office staff, EV’s, net metering calculations, GIS/billing, IT/cyber security, and AMI. After further refinement, the list was narrowed down to GIS/mapping, AMI, engineering, and effective management.

Mr. Blodgett asked the General Manager what would be needed to functionally implement the activities that were identified. It was noted that several of the activities have been started (AMI, mapping) and some are new (engineering and effective management). There was a brief discussion as to the effect to the budget if VPPSA were to implement all four of the top activities. The Board was supportive of the activities and encouraged the General Manager to move forward by including what is needed in the budget draft. It was noted that as the VPPSA budget is developed, these items will be considered and integrated into the current draft budget that will be presented to the Board Committees in November.

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The meeting was adjourned at 2:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

*Crystal L Currier*

Crystal Currier, Secretary