

**Broadband Alliance Public Outreach Meeting**

Friday, November 6th, 2015 - 10 am-11:30 am

Community Foundation of Mendocino County

New Call in Number: 641-715-3341 Access code: 108 1131#

**I. Call to Order 10:04**

**A. Introductions**

**Dan Hamburg**, Supervisor 5<sup>th</sup> District, BAMC Executive Committee, **Christian Luiz**, Network Administrator, Northern Circle Indian Housing, **Ruth Valenzula**, Field Representative, State Congressman Jim Wood, **Roseanne Iberra**, Field Representative, Congressman Huffman, **Kerrie Lindecker**, District Representative, Senator McGuire, **Howard Egan**, North Bay Association of Realtors, **Mike Nicholls**, NBNCBC Management Team Member, Sonoma, **Jennifer Maples**, Student Information Analyst, Willits Unified School District, **Judy James**, Director of Govt. Affairs, North Bay, Comcast, **Maureen "Mo" Mulheren**, Ukiah City Council Member, **Trish Steel**, BAMC Chair, **Diann Simmons**, BAMC Administrative Coordinator; **Call-in: Dave Smith**, Director of IT Services, MCOE, **Sky Shorba**, Information Systems Analyst, MCOE, **Emory Upchurch**, Computer Technician, MCOE, **Jerry Hammond**, Information Systems Analyst, MCOE, **Lucia Giovannetti**, Computer Technician, MCOE, **Pat Howard**, Computer Technician, MCOE, **Don Harris**, Technology Coordinator, Anderson Valley Unified School District, **Heather Gurewitz**, Field Representative, Congressman Huffman

**B. Approval of the agenda - no additions**

**II. Special presentation by Judy James of Comcast - Internet Essentials program**

A. Internet Essentials (IE) is a program which offers low-cost internet access to eligible families with children in the Ukiah, Willits, and Fort Bragg school districts – the Comcast service area.

- IE has been in effect 4 years and offers low-cost internet service within their service area, for \$9.95/month to all students and their families enrolled in schools with a 50% or higher number of students eligible for the free and reduced lunch program. (The price has never changed.) IE also offers low cost desktop computers or laptops for \$149 and free internet training. A free Wi-Fi router has been added, to enable students with Chrome books from school to be able to connect at home.
- Recent changes - the enrollment process has been streamlined by decreasing the lunch program number of students from 75% and now includes all students from those schools instead of only those that qualify for the lunch program. Also, families no longer need to get a letter from the school proving their child is enrolled. They

only list their school district on the form. Speeds have increased 3 times and are now at 10 Mbps down.

- So far, over 500,000 students (2 million people, including families) nationwide, have participated in the program. Judy wasn't able to get information on how many are enrolled in Mendocino County because enrollees aren't tracked by school districts.
- Top areas of enrollment owe that success to active partnerships in those areas, with school districts and non-profits that encourage students and their families to enroll. Judy is seeking more partnerships in Mendocino County. She distributed color bilingual flyers to take back to the schools and will send more directly to new partners. Contact her at: [Judy\\_James@cable.comcast.com](mailto:Judy_James@cable.comcast.com)
- Comcast also started an IE senior citizen pilot program several months ago in San Francisco and Florida, for seniors who qualify for Lifeline (subsidized landline service). They receive the same benefits as the students. So far, several thousand have applied. It includes on-site computer training sessions in senior centers, senior housing, etc.
- Dave asked if Comcast has any initiatives to push their service out into unserved areas of the county. Comcast is looking company-wide for new expansion to areas that fit their business model. An issue locally is that some students attend qualifying school districts but do not have Comcast (or sometimes any other service) at their homes.
- Trish requested that Judy try to get a breakdown of enrolled students in all of our eligible school districts, as she was given that information several years ago.
- Jennifer said that there are close to 1,000 families in the Willits School District and that she is not aware of information being sent home about IE. She took flyers with her to distribute.
- BAMC will help get the word out and distribute flyers to the other school districts and non-profits. Rotary clubs are a good potential community partner and Howard will work on that, as a local member. Information and flyers will also go to after-school programs, the family resource centers and MCOE. Trish will post the flyer on the BAMC website. Christian said that Comcast has done a good job of providing service to several of the tribal housing developments. He will be the contact to get information to the families in those areas.
- Low-income families already using Comcast services can discontinue their internet portion of the service for 90 days and then can sign-up for the IE program at a much lower rate. The speeds for IE are lower than the normal rates (10 Mbps vs 50 Mbps).
- Howard mentioned the project that Sonoma County Office of Education is looking at - local Rotary clubs will pay for to provide cellular connections on the long-haul school buses, so students can do homework during the rides. It has potential for some of the routes in Mendocino and we will keep it in mind.

### **III. Report out from last BAMC Executive**

- A. Executive Committee meeting held on Oct. 29<sup>th</sup>**

- The Executive Committee is on the 4<sup>th</sup> revision of the goals, strategies and actions, to guide our work for the next 1 ½ year. It will be shared with the larger group when completed and approved.
- Brian Churm, our Technology Chair, resigned due to a move out of state. The EC is looking into a replacement for technical advisor and a nomination was submitted.
- We received an update from County Planning and Building on the revisions to the wireless ordinances. An inland amended ordinance has been approved and work is proceeding on a coastal amendment. County staff is planning a hearing in Fort Bragg, to present the draft and receive feedback. It is important to P&B to get early stakeholder's feedback. Dan said that the planners expect an 8 month process, with it coming before the Board of Supervisors in August.
- AT&T is accepting almost 2.5 million (out of 60 million for CA) of Connect America Funds (CAF) for use in Mendocino County. This is a federal program for the price cap carriers (or large incumbents) and the first time AT&T has participated. Rhuenette Alums, AT&T Area Manager of External Affairs, has asked BAMC for input on identifying priority areas for improved infrastructure. The FCC has a map of the eligible census blocks on their website, but it is nationwide and difficult to get details. Russ Ford, County Cartographer Planner, downloaded Mendocino County census blocks from the FCC website and produced a map of these eligible areas for our county. Trish is sharing it and getting input with community members, and has also obtained a map of bookmobile locations needing better connectivity, and will provide AT&T with input from the Alliance on which areas in our county we consider priority areas.
- The FCC time line for spending the CAF funds is aggressive. County CEO Carmel Angelo has asked AT&T to make a presentation to the Board of Supervisors about their plan, but we haven't heard anything more.

#### **IV. BAMC/NBNCBC News and updates since last meeting on 10/2:**

- A. OverSight Committee meeting - Oct. 16<sup>th</sup>
  - OverSight Committee members include 1 Supervisor from each county, including Dan Hamburg. Each county gave an update of their activities. A summary of the 1st Quarter Year 2 Report to CASF was given and a representative from Huffman's Washington office gave an update about their activities around broadband;
  - Dan brought up the increased focus on broadband issues by our state and federal representatives, which he feels the NBNCBC fostered by raising awareness of the issues.
  - Assembly Bill 1262 passed to re-allocate funds, moving 5 million from the CASF loan program to the consortium program, NBNCBC will likely apply for additional money, by the end of December, to extend the consortium's work beyond June 30, 2016.
  - Dan brought up an issue on the OverSight agenda that didn't get discussed – the formation of a legal entity such as a JPA, Non-Profit, or LLC from the consortium counties to be able to take advantage of infrastructure opportunities.

- B. At Dan's request, Mike gave his comments from the OverSight meeting about the significant issue that the expected legalization of recreational cannabis will bring - the need the industry will have for broadband in remote areas for a range of activities. Senator McGuire has said that cannabis is a 42 billion dollar industry in California, (60% of the national cannabis industry) grown mainly in 5 northwest counties, larger than the rest of the state's agriculture industry combined. The incumbent, AT&T, has only 96 fibers in their 101 corridor infrastructure (as was found out from the recent outage). The Smart Train has 432 fibers, for comparison. Dan mentioned an interesting article in the New York Magazine: "Willie Nelson's Crusade to Stop Big Pot" (<http://nymag.com/daily/intelligencer/2015/10/willie-nelson-crusade-stop-big-pot.html#>) – trying to keep the major corporations from dominating the industry. There is anticipation that the Board of Supervisors will pass an ordinance in line with the 3 bills passed by the state. The legalization in Colorado has led to the state collecting double the taxes on cannabis than it does on alcohol. This is an economic issue for Mendocino, no matter how a person feels about cannabis.
- C. Benton headlines (<https://www.benton.org/headlines>) is a good resource for broadband news. An article on 11/6/15 talked about 4 types of communities for the future in broadband (<http://www.brookings.edu/blogs/the-avenue/posts/2015/11/04-four-paths-internet-bandwidth-levin>) 1. Ones that can attract google fiber 2. Larger cities with the scale and density to attract private investment 3. Smaller communities, but still with enough scale and density to attract private investment and 4. Rural communities where government must play a larger role. The point Trish took away from this article is that it is important for the smaller rural communities to have a broadband plan for their future if they don't want to be left permanently behind in a Digital Divide
- D. Assemblymember Wood, as Chair of the Assembly Select Committee on the Rural Digital Divide, held a hearing in Sacramento on October 27<sup>th</sup> that Trish and Mike attended; The hearing can be viewed online - <http://olive.calchannel.com/videos/assembly-informational-hearing-on-the-statewide-overview-on-broadband-in-rural-counties/#agenda>
- E. Wood will be conducting a second hearing on December 15<sup>th</sup> which will be followed by a public meeting in the district, yet to be scheduled. We will send out the link for live streaming of this 2nd hearing when it is available.
- F. Assemblymember Wood has also been asked to be a panelist at a conference hosted by the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) which is part of the U.S. Department of Commerce, key advisor to the White House on technology and telecom policy matters. That conference will take place on November 17<sup>h</sup> in Mountain View (Trish and Mike are both planning to attend). Here is the link to the link to the federal register notice: <http://www.ntia.doc.gov/federal-register-notice/2015/notice-california-broadband-workshop>
- G. Verizon Sale to Frontier
- Mendocino has 4 Verizon exchanges that would be impacted by a sale to Frontier, including Laytonville, Leggett, Piercy and Covelo, with 1,630 household connections. The CA Emerging Technology Fund removed its objections to the transfer after

receiving a concession that the Lifeline program will be continued by Frontier, although they only included eastern counties in the MOU, not the coastal counties. The NBNBC has sought answers from the CETF for some of these questions (why our county was not included in the MOU). The sale is moving forward, having received the FCC approval, but still waiting for the CPUC approval.

#### H. Lifeline Reform to include Broadband letter

- The Alliance signed onto a letter from the Rural Broadband Policy Group to the FCC in support of expanding Lifeline eligibility to broadband. The letter can be viewed on our website under “Correspondence with Government Agencies.”  
<http://www.mendocinobroadband.org/data-and-reports/>

#### I. 3rd AT&T/OES/BAMC (Oct. 20th) meeting

- The third meeting with AT&T and the County was held with the outage as the focus. There was a lot of discussion to clarify processes during outages/emergencies.

#### K. Upcoming dates to watch for:

1. Nov. 19th - USDA/stakeholder meeting (10-12 am at the Community Foundation): Rocky Chenelle, the lead person in the state who works under the Washington DC office of Rural Utilities Service, will present information about their grant programs. The public is invited along with stakeholders. It’s an opportunity to ask questions.
2. November date TBA by Planning Commission - first public hearing on coastal zoning revisions for broadband projects, to be held in Fort Bragg.
3. December 15th - 2nd Digital Divide hearing in Sacramento (you can stream it) We’ll send more information as we receive it.

## V. County reports

### A. Elected representatives

- **Heather for Huffman:** On Nov. 12<sup>th</sup> Huffman will hold a technical discussion about broadband challenges. This is not a public hearing but people are invited to attend to listen. Huffman convened a stakeholders’ round table for the Natural Resource Subcommittee to discuss how to leverage big tracks of federal land for broadband deployment. He will also be introducing legislation to authorize a program under the Rural Electrification Act.
- **Kerrie for McGuire:** McGuire is working on developing legislation for the next session that starts in January. He held a conference call on Oct. 15 that brought together Cal Office of Emergency Services, the CPUC and local supervisors from Humboldt, Mendocino and Sonoma and broadband associations to focus on the reporting of outages. Currently there is no mandated reporting by the providers. He wants to hold the providers accountable and require that they communicate what is happening. He is also working with PG&E to get information about their effective system, to see what could be used to craft something similar for data and 911 outages. The second call will be Nov. 23.

### B. Libraries

No update

### C. Public Safety

No update

D. EDFC

No update

**VI. Access Sonoma Broadband Update - Mike Nicholls**

- ASB is working with a potential provider about moving forward for a CASF grant application for the Joy Road area, which has 350 households.

**VII. Outreach and future agenda items**

- A. Trish gave a telephone interview for an article in California Healthline, to counter the perception that all state health-care facilities are well served and made these points: (see the article at: <http://www.californiahealthline.org/insight/2015/mendocino-broadband-problems-persist-amid-national-push-for-better-access>)
- 1) One of our hospitals and three clinics are very underserved. 2) Those that do have adequate service are in danger of losing service during an outage due to lack of redundancy. 3) Many rural residents are impacted in their health care because they aren't able to do research on medical issues they are dealing with, or apply on-line for Covered California. 4) We have emergency services and public safety issues in our county, including high-tourism areas such as beaches, without mobile coverage.
- B. The Atlantic, a monthly magazine recently published a story focused in Mendocino County and in which Trish is quoted. (see story at: <http://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2015/11/where-the-cloud-rises-from-the-sea/415236/>) The reporter was doing a report on broadband and the iCloud that focuses on the Manchester landing cable and the unserved area around it. "Where the Cloud Rises from the Sea: The cable that connects the U.S. to the global Internet runs right next to a small coastal town in California. Why do so few of its residents have broadband?"
- C. January 8th - presentation by Rhuenette Alums of AT&T and Greg Glavich of the County OES

**VIII. Meeting adjourned AT 11:38**

**IMPORTANT: December 4th meeting CANCELLED**

**Next meeting: January 8th, 2016**