

Steering Committee Meeting Notes

Friday, October 25th 10:00 am – 11:10 am

The Community Foundation of Mendocino County

204 S. Oak Street, Ukiah, CA 95482 (707) 468-9882

New Dial In Number

Dial In # (760) 569-7225, Participant Access Code: 108 1131#

1. Call to Order: 10:00 am

- a. Attendees: **Brian Churm** (Alliance Technology Chair), **Conrad Cox** (retired Mendocino County Superior Court Judge), **Doug McCorkle** (North Coast Railroad Authority), **Howard Egan** (North Bay Association of Realtors), **Jim Moorehead** (Alliance Chairman), **John Kuhry** (Executive Director, Economic Development and Financing Corporation), **Mike Nicholls** (Access Sonoma Broadband Co-chair), **Susanne Norgard** (Executive Director, Community Foundation of Mendocino County), **John McCowen** (Mendocino County Supervisor), **Trish Steel** (Alliance Administrative Coordinator)
- b. Call-in: **Andy Main** (Shasta Count ISP), **Cathy Emerson** (UCCC Manager, Center Economic Development), **Dennis Garton**, (Tehama County Supervisor), **Greg Jirak** (Mendocino Broadband Associates), **Myron Curtis** (California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office, the North/Far North Regional Consortium).
- c. Guests: **Jim Wood** (Candidate for 2nd Assembly District)
- d. Changes to agenda: Addition of Q & A with Jim Wood, update on CalFire Nov. 1st meeting, report on upcoming meeting with GAO.

2. Broadband Coalition of Northern California Counties (BCNCC)- Trish

- a. The BCNCC is asking for support letters which supports the statement, "Substandard broadband service in Northern California damages the regional economy", and in which individuals document how it impacts their organization.
- b. The Coalition has received support letters from leaders in 9 counties: Butte, Colusa, Glenn, Mendocino, Sonoma, Tehama, Shasta, Modoc, and Siskiyou. We also have a support letter from CENIC president Louis Fox, the Hoopa Valley Tribe, and the Yuba Community College District Chancellor.
- c. Yesterday we received a letter from Myron Curtis, the Deputy Sector Navigator of Information, Communications Technologies, and Digital Media for California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office, the North/Far North Regional Consortium (N/FNRC). The N/FNRC includes 15 member colleges, geographically distributed from Sacramento to the south, the Oregon border to the north, the Pacific Ocean to the west, and the Nevada state line to the east.
- d. Myron participated in today's call via conference call, and offered the following words (paraphrased): My job is to ensure that community colleges are preparing and getting students into jobs that are open. But we are realizing that in order for that to work, we have to migrate the workforce online, and for that we need broadband. Budget cuts have wiped out bus transportation, and we need to get our students online, and we need instructors online.

- e. Myron was interested in learning more about the Golden Bear Broadband project (GBB), and noted that there was no website for this project that he could find.
- f. Cathy Emerson replied, saying that GBB doesn't have funding yet for a website, but that she could provide more information to him.
- g. Andy Main (Shasta County ISP owner) said that there is money available from the state for broadband deployment, but that it is restricted to those companies that are competitive local exchange carriers (CLECs). Unfortunately, many small companies are not CLECs.
- h. Cathy again addressed this issue, and said that the new Senate Bill 740 legislation that just went into law relaxed the CLEC requirement to qualify, so Andy's company should be able to meet the new rules and be eligible to apply.

3. **Jim Wood – Question and Answer with Candidate for 2nd Assembly District**

- a. Current 2nd District Assemblyman Wesley Chesbro will be termed out of office in 2014. The 2nd District includes Trinity, Del Norte, Humboldt, Mendocino, and half of Sonoma County. Jim Wood is a candidate who will be running for this position.
- b. Jim said that he is here to learn and educate himself on the issues. A big concern of his is the challenge rural counties face related to lack of broadband. Small business owners are at a huge competitive disadvantage without access to high-speed internet, and it also impacts other areas such as medical care and education. He believes this is a big issue, not partisan, and if elected he would work with other rural counties to help solve it.
- c. Jim's background: he is on the Healdsburg City Council, and has been a dentist in Cloverdale for twenty-six years.
- d. Jim M. provided Jim with the Alliance/Sonoma Access Broadband-produced 70-page "State of Broadband" document for reading, and while pointing to the current GBB project map that was displayed for the meeting noted that the entire 2nd District is in the GBB footprint. Jim M provided a brief summary of the GBB which is before the CPUC right now, and how the Alliance has been working closely with CEO Mitch Drake and supporting this project. His summary included how the project doesn't fit the strict guidelines of the CASF program as currently defined, and that staff is struggling with how to approve this project. Our guess is that once staff has made their recommendations to the Commission (via a Draft Resolution), GBB may have to ask the Commission directly for approval (via an Alternate Resolution).
- e. Cathy Emerson, Manager of the Northeastern and Upstate CA Connect Regional Broadband Consortia facilitated a public meeting for a round table Discussion regarding broadband availability in the north state with Commissioner Catherine Sandoval of the California Public Utility Commission on October 15th in Redding. Jim M of the Alliance, and Mike Nicholls and Steve Sharpe of Access Sonoma Broadband all attended.
- f. Dennis Garton, Tehama County Supervisor and participating in today's meeting via conference line, was also one of the 50 people in attendance. He felt that the meeting went well, and that the approval of the Yurok Tribe application indicated to him that the Commission listened.
- g. Jim also felt the meeting was very successful, and that a powerful message was sent to Commissioner Sandoval and staff that there is a real problem in northern California. Her

- opening remarks at the formal Commission meeting subsequent to the roundtable meeting were a clear statement that she understands this.
- h. Cathy Emerson expressed even more exuberance with phrases such as “spectacular company” and “extraordinary pleasure” in describing the meeting. She sees the Redding meeting as a real tangible change occurring at the CPUC, and her sense is that there are internal discussions happening, and some “drilling down” into these issues which is creating a bit of an upheaval. Ryan Dulin is the new CPUC Communications Director with a background at Ca’s “911” system, and he understands that California lacks broadband infrastructure.
 - i. The fact that there are no “Internet Exchange Points (IXP)” alone is an indication that California needs serious help.
 - i. From [Wikipedia](#): An **Internet exchange point (IX or IXP)** is a physical infrastructure through which Internet service providers (ISPs) exchange Internet traffic between their networks.
 - ii. *The primary purpose of an IXP is to allow networks to interconnect directly, via the exchange, rather than through one or more third-party networks. The advantages of the direct interconnection are numerous, but the primary reasons are cost, latency, and bandwidth.*
 - j. Since the meeting, there have been three positive articles published about the meeting; we will try to post these articles on our website soon.
 - k. The entire premise of GBB is that of a diverse redundant fiber ring network that connects all of the sixteen northern counties.
 - l. JK said that one thing that he hopes Jim W takes away from this discussion is that bridging the Digital Divide is also about having *affordable* access, and finding creative ways to create the infrastructure. When national electrification and telephony happened, urban areas subsidized the poorer areas, but that is not happening with broadband. The Emergency Services network has money, and we need to prove that providing residential access through this network has benefit to Emergency Services. And having broadband access is not enough...people must be able to afford it also.
 - m. Greg brought up the Alliance Strategic Planning Document, [Components of the Digital Divide](#). All eleven of these components must be met before the Digital Divide will be closed. This document is page 24 of the [State of Broadband Report](#). Trish will email this document to Jim W.
 - n. Brian told Jim that if he is elected, the incumbents will assign him a lobbyist who will tell him that everything is fine, and that they (the incumbents) are providing adequate access. Brian’s opinion is that this prevents the legislature from doing anything, which is exactly what the incumbents want. This will be the biggest challenge legislators face.
 - o. Jim W suggested that he hopes legislators in the rural areas will step up, and if there are 16 counties involved in this widening digital divide, why not have public hearings to show the reality and highlight the issues? He rightly has concern that the longer this digital divide stays unsolved, the further all the northern rural counties fall behind...
 - p. Jim M added that Brian is in the telecom industry, keeps an eye on what is going on, and that his points about the lobbyists are all very germane to this discussion. GBB was

challenged by seven incumbents, who all claim that they are providing access and to “look at the maps.” They will also say that California shouldn’t use rate-payer money to subsidize unfair competition against them.

- q. Brian added that the incumbents will tell you that the infrastructure is there, which may be true. But what they won’t tell you is that because of pricing and the large carriers operating in a monopolistic fashion, you can’t use it. The Mayor of Ft. Bragg called AT&T and asked for a one gig connection to his business in downtown Fort Bragg, and was given a price quote of \$15,000/month. That same circuit in San Jose is several hundred dollars/month. As another example, the Sea Ranch folks asked for a price quote for a 500 MB circuit for 1800 households from Verizon, and were told it would cost \$55,000/month.
- r. Again, the Alliance feels that the incumbents are abusing their powers and operating as monopolies.
- s. Jim M recognized that an Assembly member can only do so much; the northern counties have 26% of the land mass, but only 4% of the population, so unfortunately we don’t have much political clout. This was one reason that we formed the Broadband Coalition of Northern California Counties - to try to unite our separate isolated rural county voices into a stronger, unified voice.
- t. Cathy added that Modoc and Trinity counties have NO served areas. She then continued with these statistics for the Golden Bear project footprint: 466,538 Households (HH) in CA are underserved and unserved, of which, 135,707 HH, or 29%, are in CA's 16 northern counties. Yet those same counties have only 631,402 HH, or 1.63 million people, 5% of the state's population (37 million) and 26% of the state's geography. This data is from June 2012 Round 6 Broadband Availability Data.
- u. In short, we have 5% of the state population and 29% of the underserved/unserved households.
- v. Myron added that not only are the incumbents not providing service, but that they have no plans to do so. He feels that by this stonewalling, they are actually shooting themselves in the foot because if communities were able to thrive and participate in the global market, then they could afford to buy other services the incumbents provide, such as TV. He finds it strange that they put such effort into blocking efforts for broadband build outs.
- w. Dennis corroborated this statement, saying that they said right up front in a panel discussion at the recent CETF meeting in Sacramento that they had no plans for doing so. Mike added that incumbents often say this information is “proprietary” and so won’t say if they have plans or not.
- x. The Community Colleges are an extremely important part of the internet web, and incumbents will often light up schools but not the surrounding communities. Local residents are then left without access.
- y. JK asked how the recent LTE arrays that were just permitted by the Mendocino County Board of Supervisors affect things.
- z. Brian said that the carriers are “right on track” with their wireless solution for rural access. The copper lines are being neglected, and they are pushing everyone towards a cellular solution. No one is against wireless, but the flip side is that they will cut off

landline phone service to a lot of people where that phone line is literally their lifeline (used for their heart monitoring, emergency services, etc). There are people out rural country roads that will never be within cell tower range. That's the down side. And, as you increase cellular speeds you *may* decrease the footprint, depending on how the LTE is deployed.

- aa. The terrain of northern California is rough, with a lot of trees, mountains and valleys so it will be a huge challenge and require a lot of towers if you want a complete wireless solution.
- bb. Brian said that the incumbents put together a very slick article about why the wireline has to go away, but that they left out a cheap solution. There exists carrier-grade VOIP technology which the LECs can deploy to provide dial-tone and continue their support of Universal and Lifeline services to those only accessible via existing copper telephone lines. This technology is complementary to the LECs' position that the legacy central office switching systems must be retired.
- cc. And finally, there was a two-day conference in Sacramento last week on rural broadband organized by the California Emerging Technology Fund (CETF). CETF President Sunne McPeak is very influential in broadband policy and deployment matters, and she gave the Alliance and ASB a lot of credit for getting SB740 revived after being dead on the Assembly floor. The meeting was well-attended, with Supervisors Hamburg, Brown, and Carrillo all attending.

4. Golden Bear Broadband (GBB)

- a. Mitch was not on the call, but references to GBB were made throughout the meeting. See the notes above.

5. Access Sonoma Broadband (ASB) – Mike Nicholls

- a. Last Wednesday ASB had their best broadband meeting since they began having meetings back in March. Peter Pratt was a guest at the meeting; Peter is a broadband advocate for west Marin county and is interested in having Marin County become part of a new consortium. ASB basically said that he needs to get the endorsement of the Marin County Board of Supervisors in the form of a resolution of their commitment to the expansion of rural broadband prior to joining a proposed Sonoma/Mendocino consortium.
- b. They had representation from all Supervisorial Districts, and from community groups at the meeting. Each supervisor has appointed two district representatives to ASB.
- c. Mitch Drake reviewed the GBB project and provided an update along with a broadband technical primer to get everyone up to speed with how broadband works.
- d. They developed a vision statement and a local strategy; Supervisor Carrillo reported out on the CETF meeting last week in Sacramento where he said a clear message was delivered to Sunne McPeak and the other organizers that the rural digital divide is growing worse.

6. CPUC Mapping Validation Survey – Trish

- a. Trish is working with Cathy E to get the CPUC to approve their validation mapping survey to be distributed with an Alliance cover letter, so we have a single-page document (Alliance cover letter on front, CPUC survey on back).
- b. We would like to have this survey distributed as widely as possible.
- c. We are developing a distribution plan for the county, which will include computer labs, libraries, coffee houses, and other places where people go for internet access.
- d. We will contact the County Superintendent of Schools Paul Tichinin to try to get the survey sent home with all students as well as all faculty and staff (approximately 11,000 total).
- e. We will work with the Health and Human Services Department/CalWorks and WIA for collaboration. This would also satisfy one of the conditions of our tobacco grant money requirements.
- f. We will contact Leadership Mendocino for possible collaboration.
- g. If anyone has other ideas, please contact [Trish](#).

7. Calfire update – Trish

- a. We have a special topic meeting scheduled for next Friday, Nov. 1st. The topic will be, “Facilitating Broadband Deployment and CalFire/Department of Finance Collaboration”. See the [notes](#) from 10/11/13 for more details and history of this meeting.
- b. Brian Dewey from the Department of Finance sent a detailed email back to Supervisor Hamburg which answered the question of why the lease applications were not being approved by the DoF. Included in his email was the mention of a new “safe harbor” provision which we would like to explore with CalFire. Brian himself cannot attend the meeting due to other commitments. More information will be provided at the meeting.
- c. Mendocino County Unit Chief Chris Rowney will attend (or have a representative if he cannot). We have not heard yet whether Sonoma County CalFire will be attending.
- d. Brian asked if the community could lease the tower and avoid the private party interest, and have the North Coast Internet administer it. No one knows that answer, but the Anderson Valley Community Services District was invited to the meeting to explore this idea. The CSD manager is planning to call in and participate in the meeting.

8. Other

- a. Trish reported that the Alliance and ASB are in the process of setting up a meeting with a representative from the Government Accountability Office, which is doing a study on broadband partnerships in unserved and underserved areas. They may want to use our organizations as a case study.
- b. Myron Curtis thanked us, and was encouraged that there are people working on this important issue.
- c. The Alliance thanked Jim Wood for staying for the entire meeting, and he in return thanked us, saying that he was “stunned” by what he heard to today, and that if/when elected he looks forward to working with us in the future.

9. Meeting Adjourned at 11:07

Next meeting: Nov. 1st (special topic), Nov. 8th, Nov. 15th