

**Steering Committee Meeting Notes**  
**Friday, February 21th, 2014 10:00 am – 11:05 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: **Jim Moorehead** (Alliance Chairman), **Mike Nicholls** (Access Sonoma Broadband co-chair), **Brian Churm** (Alliance Technology Chair), **Doug McCorkle** (North Coast Railroad Authority), **Howard Egan** (Norbar), **Richard Lampken** (Mendocino County Office of Education), **Susanne Norgard** (Community Foundation), **Dan Hamburg** (Mendocino County Supervisor) **Trish Steel** (Alliance Administrative Coordinator),
- b. Call-in: **Greg Jirak** (Mendocino Broadband Associates), **Cathy Emerson** (UCCC Manager, Center Economic Development), **Mitch Drake** (Golden Bear Broadband), **Myron Curtis** (California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office)
- c. Approval of Agenda: addition of an update of the Connect Joy Road Broadband Forum to the ASB report

**2. Broadband Coalition of Northern California Counties (BCNCC)**

- a. Trish had no activity to report. She would like to add BCNCC strategy to an upcoming agenda.
- b. Myron Curtis, who represents seven colleges for the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office (Mendocino, Butte, Trinity, Lassen, Tehama, Shasta, and Humboldt), gave an update on recent activities that he has been involved with.
- c. He attended the recent California Broadband Council meeting, and made some contacts there (also see Alliance notes from 2/7/14). He also authored a letter to CPUC commissioner Sandoval.
- d. He is doing some research on economic development, and wants to put together an information packet for residents about how broadband is an investment, and training on how residents can use broadband to augment their income.
- e. There are resources available in the education system to train people to start businesses, but this is a two-sided project, and realistically they want to invest their efforts in communities that are already working. They will be setting some priorities, starting first with more populous and committed areas.
- f. Richard Lamken from the Mendocino County Office of Education updated the group about some of MCOE's projects and upgrades at the schools throughout the Mendocino County. He has been spending time trying to get a bigger "pipe" (1-10 Gbps) into their county office in Ukiah because their need has increased so much. Ukiah Unified School District will be deploying 900 "one-to-one" devices soon, with a lot more to follow. They have ramped up their wireless access system, and are working with AT&T to get a

100 Mbps connection to each school. Next year they have to be ready to go live with all students in grades 3-11 for the March-April mandated school test period.

- g. There are 850 schools in California that have connections of 4.5 Mbps or less, and 10 of those are in Mendocino County.
- h. Currently, all schools in Mendocino County have some type of connectivity:
  - i. Two are only at 1.5 Mbps, and MCOE is trying to partner with Humboldt County to fix the problem.
  - ii. All other schools have at least a T-1 line. They are trying to be proactive, and by August they will have only the two schools (above) left at 4.5 Mbps or less.
  - iii. Four of the eight schools that are less than 4.5 Mbps are on the coast
  - iv. Next week there will be fiber in Manchester
  - v. Point Arena follows the next month
  - vi. Albion follows in April
  - vii. Laytonville and Spyrock upgrades will happen in July/August
- i. All these school broadband improvements are great news, and we applaud the hard work that the MCOE has been doing, in some cases for years, to obtain them.
- j. The Point Arena library situation is a bit more complicated; they have an e-rate T-1 line into the building, but with 2 separate connections. The connection for the school through the library is filtered, and therefore cannot be used for the public access. The other connection for public access is unfiltered, but is inadequate to meet the needs of the of the public.
- k. They have requested a fiber connection to the library; Greg Jirak, President of the Friends of the Coast Community Library, is not aware of any response from ATT to their requests for fiber.
- l. Brian asked Richard to please let the Alliance know when the Point Arena School goes “live” with their fiber connection. Right now AT&T maybe saying “no” to the library because they don’t show a live asset in their network, but once it is live then AT&T should be able to give a quote for a library connection.
- m. Central Valley Cable had cable TV service in Point Arena at one time, and it was suggested that maybe there are residual abandoned conduits that the city could possible get access to.
- n. Jim brought up that the Alliance strongly supports reform of the federal e-rate program that subsidizes connectivity to schools. Currently, the e-rate contract only requires connectivity to the school, and not the surrounding communities, businesses, libraries, fire stations, etc. – Broadband Silos. Sometimes having the schools served actually makes it harder to get service to these other vital areas of the community.
- o. Richard said that there are some funding increases to e-rate, with an additional billion dollars for priority areas, 100 million by the Department of Agriculture, and 750 million pledged by companies like Yahoo and Google. All this money is focused on rural connectivity for schools and libraries.
- p. The County Office was hoping to get grant funding to rebuild its aging infrastructure, but there were grant applications totaling 7 billion and only 2.4 billion worth of available funding.

- q. Mike reported that he has a meeting next week with the Sonoma County Office of Education to get an update on three schools still on T-1 lines in Sonoma County: Fort Ross, Kashia, and Montgomery.

### 3. Golden Bear Broadband (GBB)

- a. Mitch Drake was on the line and provided an update.
- b. By now everyone has probably heard the disappointing news that the GBB LLC has decided not to pursue a revised grant application.
- c. As the Route One Corridor Project kept getting smaller due to competition, it became too much of a risk for GBB to proceed.
- d. GBB did receive their CPCN certificate, and Siskiyou Telephone will keep the GBB entity alive for the near future. If another opportunity presents itself, they will look at it.
- e. Mitch took this opportunity to tell everyone how much he has appreciated our help and assistance; he said, "It's been fun, interesting, and disappointing that we couldn't take care of the needs that are out there." GBB really identified the problem that we have, and we can only hope that this will create opportunities in the future.
- f. Jim expressed his sincere thanks to Mitch on behalf of the Alliance, and that "It was great working with you...I hope we get another opportunity."
- g. Trish asked about the possibility of the R1CP as a project for the FCC's Rural Broadband Experiments that was very recently announced (<http://www.fcc.gov/encyclopedia/rural-broadband-experiments>)
- h. Mitch was open to all possibilities, but said that if GBB was going to make another run that they would have to look at simultaneous grants and other funding sources. He also thought that getting Siskiyou Telephone back to the table anytime soon was probably not realistic.
- i. Greg said that GBB's comprehensive approach to fix the problem was what made it so important to us; however, barring that, the GBB CPCN license is valuable for starting to fill the "potholes." He wondered if GBB was interested in working with local WISPs who could work under the GBB CPCN, such as at Rancho Navarro.
- j. Mitch said that GBB would have to look at specifics, the risk and liability side of such collaboration. For Siskiyou Telephone to come into such a partnership, the level of risk would have to be minimal as they already spent a quarter of a million dollars in pursuit of GBB. Mitch has been told that they are not looking at any grant opportunities anytime soon.
- k. Brian added a bit of optimism to this rather depressing reality (that the R1CP is dead), by reminding us that we heard from Richard that PA will be going live soon, and Manchester, and we find someone with a CPCN license and work to link all these pockets.
- l. Trish wondered if it is public information as to which providers have their CPCN license, and then to do more outreach and try to work with them on this idea. CE said that she can get a list of carriers with such licenses.

### 4. Access Sonoma Broadband – ASB

- a. Mike Nicholls provide an update from the last ASB meeting, held on Wednesday, February 19<sup>th</sup> in Santa Rosa.
  - i. In attendance was Vibranz, a local WISP who said that they do not have backhaul problems, and that they are looking at lighting up areas of the county that are un- and underserved.
  - ii. ASB also had a fascinating presentation and demonstration of telemedicine robotics by Jeff Dunbar, the CEO of OffSiteCare (<http://www.offsitecare.com/>) For a modest investment in the robot and ipads, a site/hospital could begin use of telemedicine. Jeff explained that they have to use ipads because Facetime is the only authorized vehicle for this (ie, they can't use Skype).
  - iii. Richard stated that Ukiah Unified was evaluating a similar robot for use instead of video conferencing equipment, and that it is interesting to consider all the possibilities. With such a device, an instructor could be at a remote location and conduct class, or students could be remote. For example, if an instructor was stuck in a snowstorm, they could go to the nearest Starbucks and using a remote robot conduct class.
  
- b. Mike also provided an update on the recent Connect Joy Road Broadband Forum, which was also held on Wednesday evening at Occidental. Three staff members of the CPUC were present and made presentations: Ana Maria Johnson (CASF team), Owen Rochte (CPUC mapping), and Tom Glegola (CASF team). There was also a broadband presentation by Cathy Emerson. Mike represented ASB, and Trish was there to represent the Alliance. The forum was well-organized, and they had a great turnout of almost 180 people who wanted to learn more about broadband options and to voice their heartfelt stories.
  - i. Some interesting stories and fascinating comments were shared....one woman, who is currently paying \$3,000/month for two bonded T1 lines, discussed her request to Comcast regarding what it would cost to bring broadband to her home office. After 9 months and repeated requests by her corporate lawyers, she finally received an answer: \$937,000. She passed on Comcast's offer to provide service, but wanted to share her story and express the frustration that people feel in trying to get rural broadband access.
  - ii. The importance of the CPUC mapping survey was stressed repeatedly, and that we should *continue* to re-submit our surveys on a continual basis. This was something we hadn't considered, but it makes sense since the carriers re-submit their information every six months. The Alliance thanked the CPUC for opening up the mapping to public input.
  - iii. Cathy Emerson added that the level of citizen engagement across the nation on the broadband issue is unprecedented, and feels that we need to keep submitting surveys and to maintain our focus as the only means to use in comparing and potentially refuting the data submitted by the carriers.
  - iv. With a lot of the questions and frustration directed towards the CPUC staff, Cathy stressed that the CPUC folks at the forum are doing their job (and doing it well) within a bureaucratic organization, *they* don't make policy, that they

didn't have to attend the forum but they did, and that we need to continue to support them. CPUC Analysts are charged with the responsibility of carrying out SB740 and following the legislation in making draft resolution recommendations. Trish also supported this statement saying that from personal experience all three staffers have been helpful and accessible.

- v. Tara Sharpe (Marketing Director of Sonic.Net) spoke at the forum but as a resident, not in any Sonic official capacity. She strongly suggested that if the residents want fiber and broadband NOW, to form a cooperative and invest some seed money. She stated that Sonic would work with them on finding grant money, and finding folks with CLEC/CPCN certification and construction firms to get things going.
- c. Mike and Cathy also were also part of an informal discussion on Saturday in Gualala concerning the possibility of reclassifying broadband as a utility. Under the current congressional climate, in Washington DC, this reclassification is extremely remote
  - i. From conversations, it is clear that people want better broadband, there is unprecedented citizen engagement in all the states, and there are tremendous undercurrents in Washington DC, as evidenced in the FCC Connect America Fund announcement of the Broadband Experiments. FCC's request for Expressions of Interest is a good indication of their desire to capture how many areas across the country represent need and would be applying for funding when made available.
- d. Mike was also able to make a good contact within the USDA, through the help of James Gore (who was formally an Obama appointee to the USDA, and is now a candidate for office for Sonoma County Supervisor). Mike hopes to set up a meeting in the next four weeks, and start a conversation about USDA grants available for rural broadband deployments, so important to agricultural communities where mandated reporting is now all on-line.
  - i. James has stated that California has been overlooked regarding disbursement of federal grants and awards. Most USDA grants have gone to mid-western states. The USDA has four grant programs related to telecommunications, and although it isn't a lot of money we have been for the most part overlooked as far as stimulus money for broadband projects is concerned. There was only one major broadband project in the entire state funded by BTOP (Digital 395).

#### **5. North Bay/North Coast Broadband Consortium – NBNCBC**

- a. The four counties of Mendocino, Sonoma, Marin, and Napa submitted a joint application to the California Advanced Services Fund back in January for the formation of a new broadband consortium: the North Bay North Coast Broadband Consortium.
- b. The CPUC had specific questions for Tom West, who prepared the application; he is currently working on the response to those questions in collaboration with the four county managers, and plans to submit their response back to the CPUC next week.

- c. We expect that by March 17<sup>th</sup> the CPUC will contact Tom West again with an answer as to whether the application survived the first round of application cuts.

## 6. CPUC Mapping

- a. The Alliance cover letter/instructions and a downloadable CPUC broadband survey PDF has been translated into Spanish by Mendocino Broadband Associates. These are posted on the Alliance website at <http://www.MendocinoBroadband.org>. We can't stress enough the importance of taking this survey, and to share the information with friends.
- b. We have no control over the actual CPUC *on-line* survey, which is part of the CPUC website and currently only in English.
- c. An iOS version of the application of the mobile cellular testing application CalSpeed is now available at the Apple App Store: <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/fcc-speed-test/id794322383?mt=8&ign-mpt=uo%3D2>
- d. We really need to keep the pressure up and get the CPUC surveys completed and submitted; Mike Nicholls had a good idea when he added to his email signature:
  - i. For better broadband data mapping, please complete the CPUC on-line survey:  
<http://www.broadbandmap.ca.gov/map/>  
Or, fill out and return the paper survey:  
<http://www.cpuc.ca.gov/PUC/Telco/bbpubfeedback.htm>

## 7. Future Topics

- a. Trish was concerned about the Connect America Fund and the Expression of Interest, as the due date for this is only two weeks away; however, there was confusion about who can submit it, and even if our area qualifies.
  - i. Cathy said that things are changing as this entire thing is in process, but she believe that if a census track is seemed "served" and therefore not eligible for funding, that it is "appealable" and we can refute the data.
  - ii. It also seems that providers need to have a federal ETC license to receive funds.
  - iii. The EI does not have to come from a provider, and it only needs to be one page. It does not commit you to applying, and vice-versa if you do not submit an EI you are still eligible to apply when the application period opens. However, the EI will help them to gage interest and develop their budget, so it is important to submit an EI if we to do all we can to ensure adequate funding for this fund.
  - iv. It was decided that ASB and BAMC will submit the R1CP as an EI. Trish will write up a draft and send to Jim and Mike for editing.
- b. Brian said that he is working with the Alex Rorabaugh Center (ARC) in Ukiah to access fiber that already exists at the building. ARC is a used by students as a place to study after school.

- c. There was also an update on the cell tower emergency power situation. The FCC has ruled that cell towers have to have back-up power. However, this ruling was suspended under heavy lobbying in Washington DC, so backup power is not always provided for cellular towers - particularly those in rural locations.
- d. During the windstorms this past November many parts of the county experienced power and cellular outages - some for several days. For example, the power outage in Potter Valley knocked out AT&T's only cell tower and many of its residents were without access to any communication, including 911 and other emergency services for over a day.
- e. As cellular is becoming the primary - and only - means of communication for many rural families it is critical that this infrastructure operate during power outages and other times when it is needed most. If you live a location which loses cellular service when the power is out, the Broadband Alliance would like to hear from you. Please let us know the tower location, if known, carrier name (AT&T, Verizon, T-Mobile, US Cellular, etc) and the conditions when you lost service.
- f. Please send this information to the Alliance:  
<mailto:admincoordinator@mendocinobroadband.org>

**8. Meeting ended 11:30**

**Next Meeting: Friday March 7<sup>th</sup>, March 21<sup>st</sup>**