

Steering Committee Meeting Notes
Friday, July 11th, 2014, 2014 10:00 am –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, Brian Churm, Mike Nicholls, Howard Egan, Richard Lamken, John Kuhry, Trish Steel, John Kuhry, Brandon Merritt
- b. Call-in: Cathy Emerson, Mike Ireton (WillitsOnline)
- c. Additions to the agenda: Move update of WillitsOnline to top of Agenda

2. WillitsOnline Update - Mike Ireton

- a. Mike Ireton, founder of WillitsOnline (WOL) called into the meeting to provide an update about their activities.
- b. Mike recently sent out a press release about Mendocino County Libraries to receive improved services from WOL. The libraries have been in great need for improved services for a long time, of which WOL was aware because they have provided many hours of free services to help out the libraries.
- c. The library had a vision for developing internet access for patrons and internal connectivity for book check-out, and put out a Request for Proposals (RFP). WOL developed and submitted their proposal, and was selected for the project contingent upon E-rate funding approval. WOL has now received an E-rate Funding Commitment Decision Letter for this project.
- d. The WOL project will provide libraries with a 100 MB internet connection in both directions, and various levels of connectivity between branches. This will provide enough bandwidth to libraries for expanded opportunities for events such as hosting webinars, and providing Wi-Fi to patrons.
- e. Mike said that when he was in Point Arena developing his proposal, he saw a flyer asking why the schools were getting fiber connectivity and the surrounding community was left without any services. He saw with his library proposal an opportunity to leverage the network built with the E-rate and anchored to the library, and to build a business case for providing services to the community. He could then provide services to unserved communities like he did in Laytonville and Covelo. He hopes to get things going soon.
- f. Jim congratulated Mike on behalf of the Alliance for this great achievement.
- g. John Kuhry asked him how the Alliance can help him with this project. Mike said that there were two things we could do: 1) Bring awareness about the project, and help keep the county “on-board”, and 2) bring to his attention any funding potential that could capitalize on this contract to get cash up front to build sooner rather than later.

- h. John said that the Economic Development and Financing Corporation might be able to do something in this regard, and John will bring this to his board. Mike will get the application and go through the submission process.

3. FCC Letter to on Open Internet – ours and BoS

- a. The Broadband Alliance and Access Sonoma Broadband submitted a joint letter to the FCC during their public comment period on “Promoting and Protecting an Open Internet.”
- b. This letter will be posted on our website at <http://www.mendocinobroadband.org>
- c. The consumer advocacy group and non-profit Public Knowledge will also be submitting a letter, and the Alliance will have the opportunity to sign onto their letter as well.

4. Assembly Bill 2119 –authority for counties to levee sales tax in unincorporated areas only

- a. Brandon reported on AB 2119, a bill introduced by Assembly Member Stone that gives authority for counties to levee sales taxes in un-incorporated areas only. Specifically, it is an act to amend Sections 7285 and 7285.5 of the Revenue and Taxation Code, relating to taxation.
- b. It passed the House and Senate and was enrolled on July 2nd, 2014. It is on its way to Governor Brown for his signature.
- c. What this means is that the Board of Supervisors can pass a resolution and put a sales tax only on un-incorporated areas. Cities would not vote on it, but it would still have to pass by two-thirds majority vote in the specific area where the tax is proposed. Services provided by this tax could then only be provided in the un-incorporated area of taxation.
- d. Transportation and road issues come to mind with this bill, but broadband could also be considered.
- e. Brian said he could see a county-wide open-access infrastructure to bring in middle-mile and a central hub.
- f. After the governor’s signature, the first step for the county would be to get the supervisors to pass such a resolution, and then it would go before the voters. Unless we held a special election, which costs a lot of money, this wouldn’t happen before 2016.
- g. You can read the text of this bill here:
http://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill_id=201320140AB2119&search_keywords=

5. Strategic Planning meeting update – Trish

- a. On Friday, June 13th the Broadband Alliance and Access Sonoma Broadband held an all-day, joint Strategic Planning workshop that focused on local initiatives that could be used to speed deployment of broadband.
- b. The workshop was well attended, including both Supervisor Hamburg of Mendocino County and Supervisor Carrillo of Sonoma County. Susanna Norgard and Brandon Merritt facilitated the meeting.
- c. The group looked at and discussed eleven potential strategies, including outlining the pros, cons, barriers, and probably of success of each particular strategy.

- d. The eleven strategies discussed were: Community Services Districts, Joint Powers Authority (JPA), Economic Development Zones, Broadband Cooperatives, Municipal Broadband networks, Infrastructure Financing Districts, a Northern California Telecom Authority (NCTA, modeled after the Marin Telecom Authority (MTA) model and expanded), private investment, Public-Private Partnerships (PPP), Business Improvement Districts (BID), and Community Foundations.
- e. The top five strategies with the highest chance of success were identified: PPP, JPA, private investment, BID, and the NCTA (expansion of MTA model)
- f. People agreed that there won't be a "one size fits all" solution, and that the Joint Powers Authority (JPA) could be a political umbrella under which the different pieces fit.
 - i. A JPA is an agreement between public agencies that is ratified by both Boards of Supervisors; a JPA can do every function that the public agency/counties can do, such as float a bond or implement sales tax.
 - ii. The parameters of a JPA's authority can vary, and this model can be very flexible and bring many agencies onto one united platform (ie, fire, police, schools, etc)
 - iii. It would include benefits such as general public good, elected people to oversee it, funding from the state to specifically pursue goals, and to bring in the pieces where they make sense in the bigger plan.
 - iv. A JPA can be formed exclusively to own and operate a telecom infrastructure should the Boards of Supervisors ratify. For example, if there is a JPA across four counties, those counties could float a bond and build a middle-mile network that is owned by the JPA.
 - v. Some of the more difficult issues with a JPA include getting the two-thirds public vote, and the possibility of lawsuit/legal challenges filed by the incumbents or legislation passed to restrict the ability of the JPA.
- g. Sonoma County and Mendocino County are already currently working on a JPA for the development of an Economic Development District (EDD) where our counties share common goals as a way to attract federal and state funding; the status of this JPA is currently under review by various offices and will go before the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors at their July 22nd meeting, and before the Mendocino Board of Supervisors at their August 12th meeting.
- h. This JPA agreement will lay the groundwork for accessing federal funding; they have hired a private contractor to create a joint Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)
- i. There is an immediate need to define the broadband problem using GIS mapping so that we know how big the problem is and refine our map of unserved/underserved areas, document and understand our inventory, and coordinate planning. The goal is to do this in the next 6-9 months.
- j. We will also develop partnerships with the North Bay-North Coast Broadband Consortium, Public Safety, K12/higher education, agriculture, and Community Anchor Institutions.

6. North Bay/North Coast Broadband Consortium

- a. As reported earlier, the California Public Utilities Commission has formally approved our grant application and the new consortium officially recognized.
- b. Funding was approved for our four-county consortium in the amount of \$250,000 (total) for two years.
- c. The four counties of Sonoma, Mendocino, Napa, and Marin will be concentrating their efforts on their priority areas and resolving the difference in designation of these areas between the consortia and the CPUC.
- d. A large part of this resolution will center on “ground-truthing” for mobile wireless signals (which causes the majority of the difference in designation) and developing a plan.
- e. Mike said that Access Sonoma Broadband has purchased an Android phone (there is no iPhone application) for just that purpose, and downloaded the CalSpeed Application for testing of wireless signal strength. Mike is going to their five priority areas and testing.

7. CPUC Mapping - Trish

- a. Publicizing the survey – We would like to get our survey link on as many websites of all kinds as possible- businesses, non-profits, government, etc
- b. Farmer’s markets – Trish will experiment with setting up her computer (tethered to her phone for Internet connectivity) at local Farmer’s Markets, and trying to get interested folks to take the online survey on the spot.
- c. Other places that might be really good to set up for this survey include the Chamber of Commerce booth at the Mendocino County Fair.
- d. Survey distribution - <http://www.mendocinobroadband.org/take-the-cpuc-broadband-survey/>

8. T-17443 Notice of Availability CASF New Timelines - (Issued May 27)

- a. You can download the PDF version (11 Mb) of the Resolution here: <https://app.box.com/s/j2xnwuslb3ybygoqo1vf>

9. ASB update

- a. The next meeting of Access Sonoma Broadband will be on Wednesday, July 16th in Santa Rosa.
- b. At that meeting, there will be a presentation by Jack Hamilton about his Oakmont Broadband survey that he did using four cell phones testing for wireless signals from the various providers.
- c. ASB has met with the Farm Bureau, the Water Agency, the Office of Education, and the North Bay Realtors Association.

10. Adjourn 11:45 pm

Upcoming Meeting Schedule

Fridays, 10:00am – 11:30am

Aug 1, Sept 5, Oct 3, Nov 7, Dec 5, 2014