

**Steering Committee Meeting Notes**

Friday, August 1<sup>st</sup>, 10:00 am – 11:30 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: Brandon Merritt (Mendocino County Executive Office), Heather Gurewitz (Field Representative for Congressman Jared Huffman), Jacob Turner (Ring Nebula), Jim Moorehead (Alliance Chairman), John Goldsmith (Alliance Financial Advisor), John Kuhry (Economic Development and Financing Corporation), Mike Nicholls (Access Sonoma Broadband Co-chair), Richard Lampken (Mendocino County Office of Education), Ray Gifford (Ukiah Wireless), Howard Egan (North Bay Association of Realtors), Russell Banker (Ukiah resident), Warren Galletti (Mendocino County Superintendent candidate), Dan Hamburg (Mendocino County 5th District Supervisor), Trish Steel (Alliance Administrative Coordinator)
- b. Call-in: Myron Curtis (Butte County, California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office), Pamela Patterson (CEO West Company), Randy MacDonald (Public Safety Communications Committee/Alliance liaison), Cathy Emerson (UCCC Manager, Center Economic Development, Peter Pratt (Marin County Manager for NBNCBC)
- c. Changes to agenda: none

**2. White House Rural Opportunities Conference**

**Pamela Patterson**

- a. Pamela Patterson, CEO of West Company here in Mendocino County, was invited to participate in a White House Rural Opportunities Conference in Washington D.C. on July 24th which focused on private/public investment in rural communities. Prior to attending, she asked for specific proposals from around the county to take for presentation to capital investors with millions of dollars and looking for investment opportunities. The Alliance provided her with a summary of a broadband infrastructure project in Mendocino County.
- b. Pamela called into our meeting and provided an update from the conference. There were about 300 people in attendance, including a group of very high level, capital investors wishing to invest in rural communities.
- c. Her big take-away from the meeting was that in order to access private capital, there needs to be some sort of public-private partnership because there are not enough federal dollars to do it. What was most interesting to her was that specialties were being formed in developing financial models in which to facilitate governing bodies in this process.
- d. Broadband, roads, bridges, water...these are all separate types of investments that large investors are looking at, and how they can obtain a return their investment over the

long-term knowing that the infrastructure is supported through ratepayers (not public dollars).

- e. One key element in getting private capital invested in these projects is aggregating and having one government authority for private investors to work with.
- f. Jim asked about public subsidies since the Return on Investment (RoI) is lower in rural areas, and a subsidy is often required for these types of infrastructure projects.
- g. Pamela said that the expectation is that there will not be a public subsidy. Many of the good investors are looking at the long-term, bigger picture and how to create a sustainable financial model. They want BIG projects and aggregation. The people who are the rate-payers are going to have to figure out how to aggregate their own service.
- h. Jim said this was hopeful, in that the private investors were looking beyond the high RoI quarterly expectations of Wall Street for their investments.
- i. She presented our \$120 million county broadband infrastructure project, but it was too small as the investors wanted bigger projects. Unfortunately, she didn't find the right connection for this project although she did meet interested investors.
- j. Cathy added that although this is encouraging, we've been having this conversation for three plus years now...and that "demand" will have to run the conversation, because the "supply" side is not doing anything.
- k. Brandon asked that Pamela send names of possible investors to the Mendocino County Executive Office, as they would like to foster those connections for projects coming up in the future that may need private financing.

### **3. North Bay-North Coast Broadband Consortium (NBNCBC)**

**Jim Moorehead**

- a. The NBNCBC is a four-county broadband consortium composed of Marin, Napa, Sonoma and Mendocino Counties. Jim is the Mendocino County manager, and provided an update from the monthly management call that was held this morning.
- b. The counties have started implementation of their Year-One work plans, and this includes meeting with "Facilities-based" providers for discussion on how the new consortium can work with them to expand broadband services, and to understand their plans (if any) for expanded service in the four-county region.
- c. The consortium has met with Sonic and had a very good meeting. They also met with Comcast, and appreciated that Comcast showed up at the table and listened, although they felt that they could not share any (proprietary) information with us. AT&T has declined to meet with the consortium, although they have invited AT&T to meet on two different occasions. AT&T indicated that they plan to go through the state process as defined by the CPUC and will answer any questions at that time to the CPUC. The invitation has been extended to Verizon, but the consortium has not yet heard back from them.

### **4. Update on Point Arena Activity**

- a. There have been some changes in the Point Arena area recently in regards to broadband services. Central Valley Cable, which has been providing wireless service in the area, has been asked to remove their equipment from the tower they have been using by August 15<sup>th</sup> by the tower owner, and so will no longer be able to offer services.

- b. However, Ray Gifford from Ukiah Wireless will place his equipment on that tower and so service will again be available to customers in the PA area. Ray has something written up in the Independent Coast Observer (ICO) about it. He will be offering 2 MB (\$49.99), 4 MB, and 6 MB (\$89.50) packages with no data caps, and is now signing customers up.
- c. Ray is anticipating that he will be able to provide service to Manchester and Elk, and potentially Irish Beach.
- d. John asked Ray how the Alliance could be of help, and Ray said, "By letting people know."
- e. Jim will send Ray an Irish Beach contact, the president of the homeowner's association.
- f. John asked about upgrading to 8 MB, but Ray said that would not be easy due to the technology, as the access points will only feed so much bandwidth through.

**5. Access Sonoma Broadband (ASB)**

**Mike Nicholls**

- a. Mike has been doing "ground truthing" in the priority areas of Sonoma County. These are the areas listed under the CPUC resolution T-17443 as being unserved or underserved in broadband.
- b. He has been doing this work using an Android phone specifically purchased for this job and the CalSpeed App. They had to purchase the Android phone because Mike has an iPhone, and there is no iPhone CPUC-approved CalSpeed app.
- c. Mike physically travels to these priority areas, and using the app runs the test for cell-coverage. This test can take up to 7 minutes/test and so can be quite time-consuming. He has run about 75 data points in three out of their five priority areas.
- d. He is finding that many areas shown on the CA broadband map as being served by mobile wireless, are in fact, not served.
- e. Mike records in a separate notebook the time, date, model of phone and location in order to understand the data that he gets back from the CPUC, and to re-take the test if necessary. The CPUC recommends taking the test at different times due to "congestion" on the network, but the mobile carriers say that there IS no congestion on the network.
- f. There was also a discussion about everyone having problems with the CPUC online broadband survey. Locally, Trish has gone to local farmer's markets and set up her computer so residents could take the survey on the spot, but is encountering problems so that this approach is not working as well as was hoped. Specifically, addresses are not locating on the map, and then if addresses do locate, many times the "send feedback" link is missing. On twenty different occasions (at three different locations and times) when she tried to complete the on-line survey with residents, but they were only able to access the survey four times, which is only a 20% success rate.
- g. She sent Owen Rochte, the CPUC mapping guy, an email detailing these problems and is waiting for a reply.
- h. Cathy said that other people in other counties are having the same problems, and suggested sending complaints to Michael Morris, a supervisor within the CPUC Communications Division who is managing the mapping initiative.

**6. California Advanced Services Fund (revised) Timelines**

- a. Cathy provided a few words about the new timelines. The broadband infrastructure grant applications will be due starting on December 1<sup>st</sup>, 2014 and accepted on a rolling/first come-first serve basis. She believes that there is \$160 million available in the fund.
- b. These funds are also open to organizations other than CLECS (Competitive Local Exchange Carrier).

## 7. Other Items/future agenda items

- a. Tim Taylor, County Superintendent from the Butte County Office of Education called in and wanted to share some information and news and ask some feedback from the group. He also feels the same frustration with the survey, and appreciates all that we are doing.
- b. In their county and region, kids don't have internet access and it's very frustrating. Stirling City can't even get the Community Center up and running with internet access for the kids. He is meeting with Those involved have met, and they are considering pursuing litigation on behalf of their kids as an "equity" lawsuit. You can't have an equitable education without internet. He stated we saw similar inequity when students were not being provided instructional textbooks and subsequently the Williams case was litigated on behalf of students
- c. Tim attended the California Broadband Council meeting in January and felt very frustrated about the meeting. The coalition travelled many miles to give public input, and sat through the long meeting because the public input was scheduled at the end. And then, before they even had a chance to speak, two of the nine members of the council left the meeting. He feels that their concerns are falling on deaf ears, and that the rural areas are being neglected. He surmised that if this was an urban area, there would already be a lawsuit but the fact that it is rural and a small segment of the population means we may have to pursue on our own.
- d. He wanted to know our thoughts about this.
- e. Jim told Tim that he has his personal support, and that Mendocino County Supervisor Dan Hamburg and Richard Lampken from the County Office of Education are also in the room hearing this conversation.
- f. Richard agreed that it's frustrating, and that here in Mendocino County the northernmost districts can't get lit up, and several are still a year away. Many kids in the district do not have broadband at their homes.
- g. Dan suggested that he look to local government to help push this forward.
- h. Tim suggested that maybe we have several children named from the different counties in this lawsuit.
- i. Heather said that Congressman Huffman has a strong personal interest in this topic, so to please keep him informed because he wants to know what he can do to help.
- j. Myron said this isn't just a rural problem; even though broadband is available in urban areas, there are huge populations that can't access it because they can't afford it. It comes down to a regional type of prejudice because of depressed economic roots...how can we partner with those groups and try to get a stronger voice? He suggested that we

also include an urban child since access to technology in urban areas can be limited by income.

- k. Brandon agreed that this was a good idea, to include an urban school so that you have both urban and rural representation in any type of class action lawsuit.

**8. Meeting Adjourned at 11:25**

**Next meeting: Sept 5<sup>th</sup>**