

Notes from the Broadband Alliance Public Outreach Meeting

Friday, March 3rd, 2017 10 am-12 noon
Community Foundation of Mendocino County

I. Call to Order

- A. Attendees: Andy Lucas (Lake County Community Development Services), Brooke Clarke, Dan Hamburg, David Pai (Mendo College), George Lee (retired physician, Yorkville), Heather Guerwitz, Katie Gibbs, Karen Horner (Mendocino County librarian), Lloyd Chasey (Gualala MAC), Mike Nicolls, Rick Ehler (OES), Trish Steel
- B. Call-in: Jenna Burrell, Ph.D (UC Berkeley professor studying rural broadband)
- C. Hand-outs:
 - (1) An article on the Chelsea Library in Michigan offering CDL Hotspots available for check-out
 - (2) Agenda projected on screen only

II. California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) Update on Rural Call Completion Proceeding

- A. Trish provided the following brief background on this topic: after the 2014 and 2015 outages, the Board of Supervisors wanted to take action to correct the problem, and Mendocino County became a “party” to this proceeding on 4/7/16 after the scope of the proceeding was expanded to include public safety issues/loss of dial tone. In July a Public Participation Hearing was held in Ukiah where residents presented testimony on the outages; Commissioner Sandoval wrote a Decision favorable to our county which addressed concerns that were presented at the hearing and the full Commission approved the Decision in December 2016; the decision had requirements for the carriers to fulfill that they were not happy with; a coalition of carriers/individual carriers recently submitted the following documents to the commission:
 - (1) Requests for a 6-month delay in implementation of any requirements. The PUC granted this delay to all requests.
 - (2) A “stay” of the requirements in the decision; the PUC has not ruled yet on this.
 - (3) A “re-hearing” of the decision; the PUC has not yet ruled on this.
- B. Mendocino County signed onto documents submitted by the Utility Reform Network in response to these recent requests.
- C. Many of these documents are posted on the Alliance website (scroll down).
- D. Supervisor Hamburg added that the 2 Commissioners who were not re-appointed had a tremendous amount of telecom experience and understood the issues we are struggling with; the new commissioners have no telecom experience. He was disappointed that the delay request was approved.
- E. Trish reminded everyone that despite these requests, the proceeding is still open and that the 8-question survey that was created specifically for input on loss of dial tone (telephone outages) is still open and that it’s important to report any outages so that

the data gets into this proceeding. The survey link is on the Alliance home page, or <http://www.cpuc.ca.gov/CallCompletionSurvey/>. Please share this link and use it to report all outages.

III. PUC white paper for 13 “high-impact” areas around state

- A. The PUC manages the state broadband infrastructure grant program, called the California Advances Services Fund, or CASF. The CASF program is at the end of its authorization, and wants to get the last of its money out the door while also working toward the legislative goal set a decade ago for 98% of the population served by projects by Dec. 2015. Currently, the state is 95.2% “served.” So, the PUC wrote this informal “white paper” which identifies 13 “high-impact” areas (HIAs) around the state where they would like to see projects that would serve the most people, ie, get “the most bang for the buck.”
- B. Metrics for identifying these HIAs included higher population densities, and un-challenging terrain. Some of the areas are in urban centers such as Riverside and LA, with population densities typically around 400-600 people/square mile, and some as high as 6,000. For comparison, Mendocino County has a density of 25 people/square mile.
- C. This is all well and good, but it doesn’t help Mendocino county nor other rural, sparsely-populated areas. In fact, only 2 of the HIAs are even in the northern part of the state (Cobb and Bolinas). However, because the north is so unpopulated, the state can meet their 98% deployment goal while still leaving a large digital divide in the northern counties.
- D. The PUC is asking for comments on this white paper, which are due by March 15th; they will review comments to decide next steps and have various options to use, such as to make the HIA’s part of a PUC resolution and “fast-track” any projects in these areas. The white paper is part of their effort to improve the efficiency of the CASF program; they also plan to *have* some workshops;
- E. Trish feels that this should not be the model going forward with any re-authorization of the CASF program, because otherwise our rural areas are completely left behind.

IV. NBNCBC News and updates

- A. The most recent NBNCBC Oversight Committee meeting was held on Feb 16th; Trish was out of town, but Supervisor Hamburg attended.
- B. The major agenda topic was what position to take on the Internet For All Now legislation (IFAN); the committee approved a “red-line” version of the IFAN text that has all the salient points that must be brought in to enable the OS Committee to support the bill (there are 5 important points). That bill died, but there are 4 new “place-holder” CASF bills that were introduced into this legislative session, and the NBNCBC will be working again with the bill co-sponsors to get our language in these bills; this is a new opportunity for input.
- C. These four “place-holder” bills are:
 - (1) Assembly bill 854 - assemblywoman Cecilia Aguiar-Curry (D - Yolo County).
 - (2) AB 928 - assemblyman Bill Quirk (D - Hayward)
 - (3) Senate bill 460 by senator Ben Hueso (D - San Diego County)
 - (4) AB 1655 by Eduardo Garcia (D - Riverside County)

V. Update from Mendocino County Librarian, Karen Horner

- A. Karen has been in her position as County Librarian for about year now, and she oversees the operation of the five branch libraries and bookmobile.
- B. Internet connectivity is a big part of library operations; all offer wi-fi which stay enabled even after the library closes, and all have public-access computers which are always well-utilized. In fact, there is usually a wait to use the computers, but the licensing expense is the reason that it's not so easy to just add more computers.
- C. Lots of residents who do not have access or only limited access at home, come to the library with their own devices to download; Ukiah can have 600 people/day coming into the library to access computers and the wi-fi.
- D. People are able to use the public computers and wi-fi whether they have a library card or not. Karen estimates that 50% of the people who use the computers/wifi have no access.
- E. Another service is that offered enables people to finish their high school diploma, for free. They can come in and sign up for this.
- F. They also offer a digital service called "Hoopla" in which you do need a free library card, and it allows you to download all types of digital media - movies, ibooks, audiobooks, music, etc. You can either stream or download onto your device (although it disappears after your check-out time is up, but you can re-check it out if needed).
- G. One need that the libraries can't meet is the need for digital education; the library doesn't have the resources to offer services to help people access sites, fill out forms, etc.
- H. Fortunately, some libraries offer that type of program through a volunteer network, which helps people learn how to use their own devices/computers/programs.
- I. Mike mentioned that in Sonoma County AT&T has a service which offers training in how to use personal devices. Trish will look into this for Mendocino County.
- J. George told about a collaborative project at the Anderson Valley High School, in which they partnered with Sonoma State, raised \$30,000 in the community, and were able to get a computer to every student at the high school. This expanded access for students tremendously, even if they didn't have access at home at least they could download to their computer, and then take home to work on assignments. George said that they made efforts to go to other communities in the county, but didn't get any feedback.
- K. I asked Karen about recent projects that she has been working on; this first year has been one of internal organization, and choosing services to purchase which will have a better impact, such as ancestry.com and more books through overdrive. She is trying to better the collections, and have added Kindles that they can provide for checkout. They are always working on better printing services as well. More public computers have been added to Willits (or maybe they want more, not sure which), and working with Laytonville to set up their library. They need charging stations at the libraries; the older buildings just are not set up for this, and so they are looking at purchasing charging stations.
- L. Rick suggested that a subscription to lynda.com would be really useful, and they offer videos on a huge range of topics including increasing digital literacy. Karen said that Sonoma County has purchased this, and that Mendocino is looking to piggy-back on it.

VI. Broadband Working Group

- A. Trish updated the group on the county “Goals and Strategies” document; the Broadband Working Group met in December and developed the draft document, and we have been getting feedback on the draft. The most recent version (#6) includes the addition of the definition of “affordable” and “broadband,” and Trish is waiting for approval from the Working Group, and then she plans to start a widespread endorsement effort.
- B. The final goal is to create a Broadband Plan by 2018.
- C. Trish will add this document to the website very soon.
- D. Brooke asked if this has already been done anywhere else, so that the effort is not being duplicated; There are other plans out there, and for sure we will be looking at these plans to see how they could be of value in our work; Mike said that Sonoma County will be hiring a consultant to create a plan for them, and that it will take up to 30 weeks to complete.
- E. Lloyd thought that part of the value of this it to get people involved in the process;

VII. Other updates

- A. Rick from Office of Emergency Services provided a brief update on recent storms; There were a lot of utility poles down throughout the county, but PG&E was good and brought in crews from other states to help in repair. He said that their outage maps were very accurate if you had a smart meter; Mike added that in Sonoma County the PGE response time was only 1.5 hours, so very good.
 - (1) He also reported that down lines is a big issue for emergency personnel; if they can't get ahold of AT&T they have to keep their people there for hours, waiting for them to arrive. For phone landline outages AT&T offered free cell phones that people could pick up at the Ukiah store; Rick said it was “some effort,” but didn't think that was adequate because the fact that many people don't have cell service so a phone does them no good; also, people would have to drive to Ukiah during storms to get the phone, and many roads were closed.
 - (2) One of the requirements in the PUC Decision was for carriers to provide a 24/7 number to public safety officials to reach a real person, not a phone system. The carriers requested a delay of that provision, and it was granted (see IIA(1) above)
 - (3) Brooke suggested Iridium phones, which will work during an outage. Rick said that such phones are too expensive.
 - (4) Mike asked if we had heard of any Frontier phone issues; Rick had heard of anything substantial; Trish had heard of 2 people in Laytonville whose landline didn't work.
 - (5) Dan asked about a constituent complaining that when the PGE power goes out, their landline (and 911) also goes out, and wondered about any legal requirements here. Mike said that their phone is probably being serviced by a remote terminal, which are operated by battery-backup during outages, and the battery only lasts for a few hours.
 - (6) Carriers are required to have reliable back-up power to remote terminals, so problems with landlines going out should be reported to the CPUC Survey mentioned in section II E above (<http://www.cpuc.ca.gov/CallCompletionSurvey/>)

- B. David from Mendocino College reported that Mendocino College is hosting a free showing of a documentary by the West Company called “Generation Startup” on March 29th at the college. The film follows 6 entrepreneurs for 3 years and takes us to the front lines of entrepreneurship in America, capturing an in-the-trenches look at the struggles and triumphs of six recent college graduates who put everything on the line to launch startups in Detroit. Following the film, there will be a panel of local entrepreneurs discussing their personal journey to building a business in Mendocino County. The panel will be facilitated by Valerie Kim, Host and News Reporter for KZYX., followed by a panel discussion with local entrepreneurs.
 - (1) Information and free registration can be found at <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/generation-startup-tickets-32378033570>
- B. Heather provided an update from Congressman Huffman’s office. The New Deal Broadband Bill to revitalize our broadband infrastructure is up and in committee now. They are working on trying to get republican support for this bill.
- C. George reported that in Yorkville, a ranch donated 2,000 acres to Sonoma State as a site for building research facilities. They will be looking to get broadband to this site to support the research at the preserve. Mike suggested contacting CENIC, and Trish will put provide some contact information to him as well.
- D. Andy from Lake County said that they are in the process of developing a Lake County Plan, and their CDS is helping in the process. They are looking for any group to join in support in their process (funding, community support, Emergency Services, Libraries, etc)

VIII. Access Sonoma Broadband Update - Mike Nicholls

- E. Mike said that they have been focusing on legislative work for the last several months now, including traveling to Sacramento to talk to legislators. They plan to go back again in April when these bills are in committee.
- F. They are also working on their Broadband Strategy plan; they put out an RFP, and had 4 responses. They hope to finish the evaluation process next week.
- G. CalTRANS also wants to meet with Stakeholders about the conduit bill, and Mike will be involved in this meeting/discussion (along with Trish from Mendocino)

IX. Future agenda items - none suggested

X. Meeting adjourned at 12:00 noon

XI. Next meeting: May 5th, 2017