



**Draft Minutes for Friday, June 4<sup>th</sup>, 2021**

**I. Call to Order**

Zoom attendees: Supervisor Ted Williams, Supervisor John Haschak, Sheba Brown: Congressman Huffman's Office, Will Tesconi: Assemblymember Wood's Office, Darcie Antle Executive Office, Michelle Hutchins Superintendent of Schools, Kathy Wylie Chair BAMC, Keith Grunberg Hunter Communications, Brentt Blaser-OES, Calvin Sandeen: SMEDD, Megan Barber Allende: The Community Foundation of Mendocino County, Devon Jones: Farm Bureau, Jim Moorehead: BAMC, Katie Gibbs: BAMC, Megan Honey: Civic-Spark-Fellow, Paul Garza: West BDC, Brian Bottari: Comcast Government Affairs Director, Michael Nicholls: Access Sonoma Broadband, and Jeff Tyrrell: Admin. Broadband Alliance of Mendocino County.

- Chair Wylie called the meeting to order at 10 am, as participants continued to join.
- Revisions to the agenda: To accommodate overlapping schedules, Calvin Sandeen and Sheba Brown requested earlier positioning on the agenda. (Minutes retain original order.) Comcast representative Brian Bottari was added to Community Partners, and MCOE's Michelle Hutchins was moved to Elected Representatives.

**II. Grant Opportunities**

- [CASF Implementation Project Status](#) – **Keith Grunberg**, Hunter Communications Director of Carrier, Government & Wholesale Services

Keith Grunberg reported that in April of 2020 we submitted our first draft of the California Advanced Services Fund grant application for Mendocino County's implementation project plan #1. A month later, with the deadline extended, we revise that and resubmit it. We narrowed it down and revised it to try to encompass more tribal areas that were underserved or non-served, and then submitted it once again, at the project cost of roughly \$150 million. We are still waiting to hear back from the CPUC whether or not this will be rejected or accepted.

We have had several conversations with the other Rural Digital Opportunity Fund recipients within Mendocino County to help identify the backhaul of their infrastructure plans, because they can't do anything without fiber to their towers. We are working through details



regarding location of potential tower structures to identify the areas for backhaul and tying back into backhaul sub points.

A consortium type collaborative approach has worked very successfully in the past, with other projects that I've been engaged with, especially in Oregon. If we get RDOF money and can augment the broader community effort with tribal opportunities, it could help reduce some of the CASF costs moving forward; we must look at all variables, Keith concluded.

### III. Business planning Re: Broadband Implementation - Calvin Sandeen, SMEDD

Broadband Department Analyst, Sonoma County EDB

Calvin Sandeen explained that the Sonoma Mendocino Economic Development District's broadband planning initiatives ties into what Sonoma County and Mendocino County are doing individually. We are exploring the possibilities of creating a publicly governed broadband entity that would provide the ability to leverage state and federal funding. We will present the Access Sonoma Broadband Action Plan to the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors on Tuesday June 8<sup>th</sup>, for approval to move forward. These opportunities could also be expanded regionally, and this entity could serve not just Sonoma, but also Mendocino County, Napa and Marin as well. SMEDD is interested in the potential of forming a JPA or other entity that could leverage federal and state broadband infrastructure grants.

Our next steps are to align with the governance structures, create a business plan for this entity in order to make sure that it is as foolproof as possible, thereby increasing the chances of success for the organization. We are trying to get funding from the county as well as federal agencies, including the Economic Development Administration for the planning process.

The business planning involves closely examining all the different components that make the product sustainable long term, the marketing analysis, the profit and loss, the design and engineering, the network, long term strategies. We are concern with everything that make all the different operations work, including leasing infrastructure, contracts, or whatever services we deployed on the network.

### IV. Marketing and Outreach Strategy

- a. Crowd Source Speed-Test Survey & Mapping Tool
- b. Publicity campaign around broadband infrastructure

A large part of marketing outreach strategies is our crowd sourced Speed-Test survey and mapping tools. Sonoma County has just launched their crowdsourced speed test, and it's impressive. ours will provide great information for successive grant applications. We will own the data and it will be open source. We have discussed the Speed-Test at previous



meetings, and it has gone before the County Board of Supervisors, for approval already. We're working to finding the right fit and coordinate additional resources to publicize it.

In the process of publicizing the Speed-Test, we will build community engagement through the outreach, highlighting other important topics regarding broadband in Mendocino County. A publicity campaign around the Speed-Test will enhance our grant opportunities, through the data we collect and by clear demonstration of community support.

As background, broadband grants are distributed according to the number of unserved households in each area. Where carriers have indicated that they are serving households, we are not eligible to receive grants. Historically, rules have said that if a single household in a census block is served, then that census block is served. So, the maps are distorted, and we don't have opportunities to develop infrastructure with grant funding, if the numbers are incorrect. By providing our own accurate data, we can apply on behalf of a greater geographic area of the county.

**V. Update from Elected Representatives:**

• Congressman Huffman:

Sheba Brown has been in communication with the Broadband Alliance regarding grant opportunities, and Congressman Huffman's office is always available to discuss letters of support for grants and policy.

• Senator McGuire:

The Governor's May Revision proposed \$7 billion over two years to address the internet connectivity needs of all Californians via Control Section 19.50. The request includes \$2 billion in fiscal year 2021-22 from the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARPA), and a total of \$5 billion in 2022-23 (\$3.5 billion from ARPA and \$1.5 billion from the General Fund).

The Legislature has proposed to provide \$7 billion (\$2 billion ARPA and \$5 billion General Fund) for broadband issues, with specific direction to be determined through additional Legislative Action. This would be allocated as follows:

- \$7 billion statutory appropriations subject to the following schedule:

2021-22: \$1 billion ARPA Funds

2022-23: \$1 billion ARPA Funds

2023-24: \$1 billion General Fund

2024-25: \$1 billion General Fund



2025-26: \$1 billion General Fund

2026-27: \$1 billion General Fund

2027-28: \$1 billion General Fund

- Specifics of the Broadband program to be determined through additional Legislative Action beyond June 15.

- Assemblymember Wood:

Will Tesconi described broadband updates as “Some exciting news regarding middle mile infrastructure rollout in the governor's May revise!” Legislators are cautiously optimistic. Ultimately, we await the details regarding a big project. The May revise does not have a lot of broadband specific detail right now accept it sounds like Caltrans is going to be deploying the project and that the Department of Technology is going to be managing the infrastructure and there perhaps will be an opportunity to lease existing middle mile. I do think we will see middle mile projects moving across our state.

SB 4 and AB 14 continue to work their way through the legislative process, with the collaboration of authors Assemblymember Aguiar-Curry and Senator Gonzalez.

Dr. Wood’s ‘Dig Once’ Bill AB 41 also continues an effort to get CalTrans and other regional players to commit to streamlining deployment of conduit whenever trenches are dug. This is a matter of increasing efficiencies and no longer permitting carriers to cherry-pick certain regions for deployment, based on profitability models.

- Supervisors Williams & Haschak:

Supervisor Williams said: “I think all eyes are on the coming state funding for broadband. And, you know, we don't know exactly what the terms will be, we may have to move in in Quick Time to retrofit existing plans. But the good news is over the last year, a lot of research has been done. And I think I think we're ready to massage what we have into what will meet the state's criteria.”

And Supervisor Haschak said: “The Mendocino County Board of Supervisors directed staff to write a letter in support of the governor's funding. And hopefully that has happened. We were supposed to collaborate with you, Jeff and Tom. So hopefully, what's gone out already.” Which was confirmed, to the degree possible.



- Mendocino County Office of Education.

Superintendent Hutchins reflected that, as we finalize the school year, we're very happy to put this one to behind us.

Regarding ESSER II funds, most school districts are using their funds for technology and equipment, including hardware and software. For the most part the planned expenditures are for long term closures. We're looking at this as an opportunity to be able to keep schools in session in the event of heavy smoke during the fall. We may have other emergency situations that close our schools. The money that schools are receiving, while a lot, are not enough to overcome the broadband challenges that our rural districts have.

Part of the issue is that some of our rural districts on the coast are "Basic aid" districts and are they are receiving very few dollars from the state and federal government. The discrepancies between school districts can be seen at this website, in the chat box.

[If you click on the different school districts in our county](#), you can see the dollars. Ukiah Unified, for example, is open for hybrid instruction at the elementary level and as the district they are receiving \$13,616,073 in assets or funds, for in person instruction. Some districts are receiving a lot of dollars, but that's spread out to also upgrade ventilation systems to be able to provide PPE equipment, and to retool the classrooms for in person instruction utilizing the physical distancing, etc. By contrast, you'll see that schools like Point Arena School District is only receiving a little over \$300,000. There's a lot of inconsistency for example, Anderson Valley, which is the school district right next to Point Arena, will be receiving 1.1 million.

On another topic, there is a reaction to the tribes initiating broadband expansion, and it is causing some issues in Round Valley area and extending into some Potter Valley homes. There is a battle going on between the tribe and Willits Online regarding of who owns the current frequency that the school uses to provide instruction today. The school district had 3 days of service interruption while the tribe and Willits Online discussed the frequency issue. We have quite a few people involved in supporting the school district right now, and the California Department of Education is working hard to emphasize that whoever wins this battle, it's really important that the school district not have any interruption of service, and no increase in cost. If it does switch over to the tribe, the tribe must instantly become eligible for E-rate, because that is a significant discount to the schools. The school district is extremely concerned right now about making sure that consistency of connectivity continues.



Chair Wylie asked Superintendent Hutchins if the State is committing resources to permanent online models? She responded by saying “The state does not want to create a third track they have right now we have an in-person track, and we have an independent study track... the governor does not want to see a third track, a distance learning track.

**VI. Community Partner Reports:**

- Mendocino County Executive Office
- Office of Emergency Services

Brentt Blazer from the Mendocino County Office of Emergency Services began his presentation by saying: “As everyone is likely aware, the Office of Emergency Services conducted and emergency warning exercise last week, on the 25<sup>th</sup>-26<sup>th</sup>. It was a really big lift.” He elaborated on some of the interesting aspects that came out of reviewing survey responses. The survey was not geocentric. If we had more time and money, we would conduct a more thorough analysis of where the survey responses originated.

Notably, over 40% of the people who responded said they did not receive the wireless emergency alert. The various systems, such as Nixle, utilize different technologies from text message to radio transmission, or cell signal. We learned that the processes we need to support with our infrastructure and our messaging need to be geared towards mobile devices. We will be conducting an after-action report, with a completion date set for the 22<sup>nd</sup>.

State-wide first responders are looking at the emergence of artificial intelligence and watch cameras. We would like to see these upgrades as the next state project. When it comes to emergency communication, for alerts, the AI thing can be very helpful in early notification for earthquakes, fires, tsunami, etc. with sensory data able to provide early notification. But it is all dependent on how good our infrastructure is at communicating back to the public.

As we conduct our due diligence, we are establishing effective messaging. Each platform is different, like looking at Twitter and Facebook, you only get so many characters. In Nixle, 160 characters for a text message should be a benchmark, but a web page or emails have different character counts. We are also working to better defining our evacuation zones and having more and unique, pre-staged evacuation areas, with available maps.

Finally, to bring it all together, I would just say that rural counties have a much higher threat, when it comes to wildfire, flooding, and even active shooters. So, these are all great arguments for your project applications moving forward.



- North Bay North Coast Broadband Consortium [[February Minutes](#) , [May Agenda](#)]

The North Bay North Coast Broadband Consortium consists of four counties, Mendocino, Sonoma, Marin and Napa. The Consortium was created as a result of a grant from the CPUC. We're on our third round of grants with a year and a half left to go. The Oversight Committee consists of Supervisor Ted Williams representing Mendocino County with John Haschak as his alternate, along with counterparts in the other three other three counties.

Marin is deeply involved in developing a strategic Broadband Plan, which they hope to have a final draft by early fall. The one takeaway there that might be a value to Mendocino is in their efforts, they have created what they call a community advocate network. So what they have is 40 or 50 people in the communities that have formed more or less a human network to espouse the need for broadband across the county. And they did an extensive amount of work to create such a vehicle.

Napa County has taken quite a different approach. They are at the point now where they've hired a consultant to help them to identify project areas, they're sort of behind where the other three counties are, in terms of actually promoting specific projects. The one thing that they have done very recently is they have been working with a company that wanted to deploy towers, primarily for emergency purposes.

Representing Sonoma County Calvin Sandeen, Mike Nicholls, are part of Consortium Management team and you have just heard Calvin's report.

Diane Dillon from Napa is the chair of that group. The consortium is bound, by an MOU that has been signed by the supervisors of each of the four counties. The Sonoma County Economic Development District is the fiscal agent, which is a requirement of the CPUC. In the next six months or so, there will be continued discussion about the future of this organization, as it relates to promoting broadband across the region. Our mission is the state's goal of broadband access in 98% access in each region. Mendocino County is at last count, somewhere around 75% of access, and the other counties are much closer to 95%.

- West Business Development Center
- Mendocino County Farm Bureau



Devon Jones said that the Farm Bureau has been primarily focused on the drought, but they are working with counterparts in Sonoma County to advocate for some technology-based solutions which are dependent on good connectivity.

Increased numbers of weather stations, and improved technologies for soil moisture monitoring, are going to be key in areas, like Anderson Valley who don't necessarily have alternative water supplies. With improved connectivity, some technologies could be updated within the agricultural sector improving efficiencies. The community is hopefully awaiting outcomes and combinations of multiple efforts. By the end of the month, we may get some drought funding for some of these technologies, which would play into a broader implementation strategy.

- Comcast Government Affairs Director, Brian Bottari

Comcast's response last year to PSPS was to work on our network is powered. It's, extremely reliant on commercial power. It's very decentralized in terms of using electricity to kind of push our signal along. So, we deployed generators, small generators, to our nodes that serve public safety facilities: Police, Fire, County, City, OES, and Hospitals. This fire season, we will be doing more of the same, but the generators are much bigger this year. They're trailer based now, so there might be some community questions. We're working out how to kind of message to the folks who may end up with a big trailer parked in front of their house during a PSPS.

There will also be some expansion of that the CPUC resiliency order that came down a few months ago, requires us this fire season to keep those facilities up, as well as some form of cell shadow areas as defined by the Commission. And I haven't seen that map yet. By next fire season, we are required to have the generation on our network in all tier two and tier three fire areas.

Kathy Wylie asked a question about Cell-On-Wheels, and Brian Botarri explained that Comcast offers no wireless services. Tom West asked questions regarding backhaul, with a promised follow-up from the Comcast representative.

## VII. Pending or Recent Legislation:



[AB 14](#) and [SB 4](#) are essential for continuation of CASF funds. Senator Mike McGuire is a sponsor or co-author for both. And AB 14 is also being sponsored or co-authored by Assemblymember Jim Wood, as well.

The two authors, Senator Lena Gonzalez and Assemblymember Cecilia Aguiar-Curry are working together to resolve the details and differences between their Bills.

[Here is a primer for a more extensive analysis of current State broadband legislation.](#)

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Regarding Federal legislation the group had briefly discussed many of the funding opportunities at the outset of this meeting; specifically, discussion of the California Advanced Services Fund (CASF), and Rural Digital Opportunity Fund (RDOF) have been extensive, relating to grants.

Additionally, The DATA Act has already been passed and nearly \$100 million has been allocated to its implementation, which will improve mapping accuracy. The data from our own speed-test should be usable; we can be integrated into the larger scheme, but we will own the open-source data.

The Emergency Broadband Benefit Program, which has been awarded \$3.2 billion for the Emergency Broadband Connectivity Fund, provides a \$50 dollar subsidy for eligible households, on a low-income basis, and as much as \$75 on tribal lands. Additional program details provide the possibility for a \$100 subsidy toward equipment purchases.

Well over a million people have subscribed to the EBB program in the opening month.

Slides and screen-shares provided bullet-points on recent NTIA broadband grants and the billion dollars to expand on tribal lands, as well as some brief details about the American Rescue Plan Act and the American Jobs Plan, & Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund II ESSER II.

[Here is a lengthy primer on Federal broadband legislation.](#)

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## VIII. Updates on Sonoma County and regional broadband activities



Mike Nicholls reflected on the fact that this is the 10th anniversary of his first BAMC meeting. Jim Morehead invited him up in 2011 to start participating; Mendocino County was leading the broadband effort in Northern California, at the time, as part of a different consortium.

Mike Nicholls also provided a link and an update regarding Sonoma County's Speed Test Initiative <http://sonomaedb.org/Current-Projects/Broadband/>

**IX. Final Comments and Future Agenda items**

Supervisor Williams and NBNBC Manager Tom West discussed the importance of inviting additional stakeholders like Adventist Health to quarterly meetings, as there is an alignment with the Blue Zones efforts and the increased importance of telemedicine, in the current environment.

**Next meeting: Friday, Sept. 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2021**