

Steering Committee Meeting Notes

Friday, February 22nd, 2013 10:00 am – 11:20 am

The Community Foundation of Mendocino County

204 S. Oak Street, Ukiah, CA 95482 (707) 468-9882

Dial in at (605) 477-2100 Participant access code: 565491#

(If you have problems dialing in, try dialing (805) 360-1075 first, then the regular number, then #, and then access code and # again)

No meeting next week, March 1st!

Call to Order: 10:00 am

1. a. Attendees: Brian Churm, Carol Brodsky, Jim Moorehead, John Goldsmith, John Kuhry, Trish Steel
- b. Call-in: Greg Jirak, Dan Hamburg
- c. Guests: Erica Cooperrider (Executive Director Mendocino Access Television), Phil Dow (Executive Director MCOG)
- d. Changes to agenda: Report on meeting with Jared Huffman, PEG discussion

Golden Bear Broadband/R1CP Update

2. a. If the Golden Bear project is approved, it would provide \$138 million of capital construction in sixteen rural counties.
 - b. The permitting coordination kick-off meeting between Sonoma and Mendocino County is scheduled for March 27th. Of the 16 counties, only Sonoma and Mendocino have the extra layer of permitting on the project due to coastal zone regulations.
 - c. Mitch Drake cannot attend due to scheduling conflicts.
 - d. It appears that PG&E is interested in looking at broadband as a business opportunity; in terms of permitting it would be good to get them involved also. Mitch will arrange for their participation in a future permitting meeting.
- 3.

Report on Meeting with elected Representatives

- a. Much thanks to Heidi Dickerson for arranging a meeting between the Broadband Alliance, our representatives, and Golden Bear Broadband. Attendees were: Congressman Jared Huffman and Ben Miller (Huffman's Chief of Staff), Mitch Drake (Golden Bear Broadband), Cathy Emerson (Upstate California Connect), and Greg Jirak and Mike Nicholls (Alliance).
- b. Greg felt it was a good meeting, and that Congressman Huffman really listened and came to recognize there was a real problem and that he wanted to help.
- c. Representative Huffman asked the important question, "What can I do to help solve the problem?" The Alliance is currently working on a response, and we need to think strategically in answering that question.
- d. Anyone is welcome to provide input in regards to our response to this question; our response will be reviewed by the Executive Committee and be part of our strategic planning meeting on March 1st.

- e. Maybe it might be best to use him for dealing with Government agencies such as the FCC, or Greg was thinking about truth in advertising and consumer protection. If you have some thoughts/ideas about this, please email Greg as soon as possible and he will compile a document, and we will have an item on the Executive Committee meeting agenda for “Huffman response.”
- f. On another topic, Dan asked if they had a chance to talk about the status of the EB5 Regional Center status with Huffman; Greg answered that they just briefly touched on it. This is still a very important issue, and Joseph Kong will be up in Mendocino next week and hopefully Dan can meet face-to-face with him before the Executive Committee strategic planning meeting. Joseph is planning on bringing up a group of fifteen potential Chinese investors to Mendocino County in April. Dan thinks that the strategic planning meeting needs to discuss alternative sources of funding because of the situation with the regional center pending application. There are also some wealthy individuals here in Mendocino County and Sea Ranch who may be interested in this investment opportunity.

MCOE/MCOG Transportation Planning Grant – *Bridging the Digital Divide*

- 4.
 - a. Steve Turner of MCOE submitted the grant application, “Proposal for Bridging the Digital Divide in Mendocino County” to the Mendocino Council of Governments (MCOG) on February 13th. This proposal will be discussed at MCOG’s board meeting on March 4th as one of four grant requests under consideration for matching the Caltrans planning grant. The agenda is posted on MCOG’s website at <http://www.mendocinocog.org/agendas/pdfs/b130304a.pdf>
 - b. Phil Dow, Executive Director of MCOG attended today’s meeting. He has put the Alliance on the MCOG agenda separate from the grant consideration, and was here to talk a bit about that and he also had some questions for us.
 - c. The Alliance is on the top of the agenda so we can make a half-hour presentation about who we are and what we do before the application is considered, as some of the MCOG members may not have heard about us.
 - d. Jim will introduce the Alliance, and Greg will do a power point presentation; Brian and John Kuhry will also be in attendance.
- 5.

Public, Educational, and Government access television (PEG-TV)

- a. From Wikipedia: *Public, educational, and government access television (also Local-access television) refers to three different cable television narrowcasting and specialty channels. Public-access television was created in the United States between 1969 and 1971 by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) and has since been mandated under the Cable Communications Act of 1984, which is codified under 47 USC § 531. This is a form of non-commercial mass media where ordinary people can create television programming content which is cablecast through a cable TV system. The channels are reserved for free or at minimal cost. The local origination television content revolves primarily around community interest, developed by individuals and non-profit organizations. Educational-access channels are for distance education, and are generally reserved for educational purposes and are not for or Government-access or*

Public-access television. Government-access television is cable channel capacity for the local government bodies and other legislative entities to televise public affairs and other civic meetings.

- b. There is a nationwide system of PEGs. In Mendocino County, we have three: Ukiah, Willits, and Fort Bragg. Each is considered a 501c3 and has a Board of Directors.
- c. Mendocino Access Television (maTV) is the Ukiah PEG and Erica Cooperrider is the (relatively) new Executive Director. She attended today's meeting to gather information and figure out how mcTV can tap into the broadband issue.
<http://mendocinoaccess.org/>
- d. PEGs receive part of their funding from a 5% Comcast franchise fee revenues for *television* broadcasts; these revenues are declining due to more content being broadcast over Internet Protocol (IP) and not cable, so revenue for the PEGs is also declining. The fee revenues are paid to the cities, and each city then decides on revenue sharing with the PEGs. Eventually Comcast will be all IP. The PEGs face the strategic challenge of replacing these fee revenues with an alternate funding mechanism.
- e. The PEGs play an important role in Mendocino County, and should not be allowed this continued decline. We don't know the financial situation of all the PEGs, but the coastal PEG Executive Director Elizabeth Swenson has said that their operations have been affected (Jim). She suggested a special meeting of the PEGs which includes the Alliance to discuss this issue and to share in our expertise and experience in broadband.
- f. In our Broadband Plan for the county, we feel that the PEGs need to do some strategic planning so that we don't lose this important service. Many public meetings are broadcast including the Board of Supervisors and city council meetings. Erica stated that right now they have only two years of funding. The Santa Rosa station was recently shut down, and we want to help avoid that situation here.
- g. **The following correction was added from Elizabeth Swenson, Executive Director of the Mendocino Coast Television: "The Santa Rosa station was threatened with losing all their funding, but it should not be closed down as implied in a February 4th Press Democrat article. Their budget was cut in half (\$300,000) however. The "new" city manager in Santa Rosa wanted to use the money for strictly government access that would be run by the city - i.e., no public component, no access center. The city council and others felt the Santa Rosa community media center was too important - the access center should continue to be funded to cover government meetings as well as have a public component.**
- h. To survive, the PEGs need to evolve to a streaming set-up, but how to get revenue from that is the question. That is why a lot of PEGs are connecting with the broadband issue. Erica stated that her PEG has streaming capability, but that the only reason that they have it and can afford it is because of personal connections.
- i. Erica was asked about revenue from the different groups that use the PEG. Ukiah gets their meetings on the air and use their Channel 3 but don't pay them any money, they simply call in and take over the channel. Regarding the college, the media coordinator for the college is on the PEG board, but with budget issues the college is neither doing any productions nor having any classes in production. Erica tried to get more student memberships, dropping her membership price to \$5 but without any luck.

- j. Carol Brodsky also was at our meeting, and she is on the mcTV board. She is thinking about March 22nd for a meeting, inviting the other PEGs to come to discuss this issue and to research how nationwide PEGs are tapping into the broadband issue. She also welcomes anyone else who would like to attend and share ideas.
- k. The general feeling about this is that it's a huge challenge, but it's still a problem that we have to solve. Brian suggested looking for public/private partnerships. Jim reminded us that solutions can exist even if they are not obvious.
- l. JK added that we are focusing on infrastructure, but how we use it is what is important, so how do we address content issue?
- m. The maTV board is discussing fund-raising, and there are some personal connections with Willie Nelson's son Tyler, who is all about broadband and up to speed on the issue. He also has a venue, and they are talking and would like to help. It may not turn out, but maybe it will.
- n. Dan is very involved with the county PEGs, so we should make sure he is kept up to date on what is being done and needs to be done.

Meeting Adjourned at 11:20

6.

Next meeting: (no meeting March 1st) March 8th, 15th, 22nd, 29th