

Steering Committee Meeting Notes

Friday, April 5th 10:00 am – 11:30 am

The Community Foundation of Mendocino County

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

1. Call to Order: 10:00 am

- a. Attendees: Brian Churm, Carole Brodsky, Dan Hamburg, Greg Jirak, Jeff Tyrrell (District Representative for Senator Noreen Evans), Jim Moorehead, John Goldsmith, John Kuhry, Mike Nicholls, Mindy Kittay (County Librarian), Trish Steel
- b. Call-in: Susanne Norgard, Steve Turner, Mitch Drake
- c. Changes to agenda: under GBB a discussion of Sea Ranch was added.

2. Golden Bear Broadband (GBB) update

- a. The GBB project has been challenged by the big telecoms, including ATT, Verizon, and Comcast. The Alliance has posted GBB's responses to the challenges on the NCRMMI webpage: <http://www.mendocinobroadband.org/ncrmmi/>
- b. Mitch said that their comments have been submitted and received by staff, and then they are on standby for other questions from the CPUC.
- c. Everyone admitted frustration over these challenges and the obstacles that we seem to be facing, especially since the challenging telecoms were invited to be partners in the formation of GBB, but refused to participate and are now doing everything they can to block it.
- d. A publicity plan is in the works for educating the public about what is going on. Carole Brodsky will be working on this, and has some story ideas. Anyone is encouraged to share ideas about this topic with us.
- e. Former Mendocino County supervisor Norman DeVall responded to an email on the topic and was invited to attend one of our meetings.
- f. Frustration around these challenges to GBB led to a bit of a digression to related topics...
- g. Dan Hamburg mentioned that on today's Democracy Now program (April 5th) media-reform advocate Robert McChesney was interviewed on his new book, Digital Disconnect in which he looks at how the future of American politics could be largely determined by who controls the Internet. The telecoms dominate Washington DC with the result being that we pay more money and get less service. The link to the show: http://www.democracynow.org/2013/4/5/digital_disconnect_robert_mcchesney_on_how?autostart=true
- h. The youtube video "The First Honest Cable Company" by ExtremelyDecentFilms is getting millions of hits (almost 3 million), as it expresses this frustration people feel from around the county. The link to that video is <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OilMx7k7mso> (warning: strong language)

- i. Mike suggested that most people don't even have any idea speeds that they are supposed to be getting, and don't know how to test their speeds. This led to a discussion where the Alliance thought it would be good to create a user guide with "bullet points" about the internet speeds which includes running regular speed tests, and to create a "speed test" webpage.
- j. There is also variability depending on which speed test you run; Jim was told by ViaSat that speedtest.net doesn't work well with satellites, and was given a Beta-version of a speedtest to use. Jim was suddenly getting 22 Mbps down/6 Mbps up. When Brian used it at his house, he was getting 150 Mbps down and 200 Mbps up.
- k. A consumer "checklist" is another idea we are working on...
- l. Back to the Golden Bear Broadband, Steve suggested a follow up on the suggestion of Phil Dow (MCOG) to get the Regional Transportation Agencies (RTA) in the 16 county superregions involved to carry support for GBB forward. Both the COGs and RTAs have economic responsibilities and work with local agriculture so it could be a good match.
- m. Jim agreed that for the bigger picture it's a good idea, but didn't think there was enough time for this in regards to the GBB challenges.
- n. The decision on GBB may be made soon (one guess is around June 20th, about 106 days from the submission date of Feb. 1st). But it's a guess; it's possible the decision has been made already.
- o. The decision is made by the Public Utilities Commission (PUC), whose members are appointed by the governor. So, while the PUC is accountable to the governor, it relies on the Senate and Assembly for budgets and legislation.
- p. Mitch suggested that we don't need to send any more letters in support of GBB – the CPUC staff says there are plenty - but to keep "doing what we are doing."
- q. Jim related the experience of Charles Reinhart of the Joshua Grindle Inn. Charles sees the bigger picture of what is going on and posted information to the MCN listserve at 11:30am Sunday, and by 10 am the next day he had many email responses from the listserve about the inaccurate Comcast maps. 15 of these emails were included in the GBB response to the Comcast challenge. So, there is pent-up energy out there around this issue, and the question is how to harness and focus it for our elected officials and the PUC.
- r. Carole suggested that our local story can be the nexus from which everything flows out of, and will fuel other areas in the 16 counties to become involved.
- s. John Kuhry suggested something similar to the 350.org campaign for global warming. It became a central repository to send messages to legislators.
- t. Sea Ranch is a community on the south coast that wants and needs good broadband access. The Alliance talked with Peter Youtz about developing a strategic broadband plan that would be approved by the Sea Ranch Association that calls for fiber to the premises within five years. Sea Ranch is aware of the relationship between broadband access and property values, and interested in setting themselves apart from other communities.
- u. Recently Verizon has lit up some of their copper DSL/ADSL lines to provide 3 MBPS service in a 3 mile radius at the south end or Sea Ranch. It was thought that a lot of

residences couldn't get the service even within the 3 mile radius, as the copper deteriorates if moisture gets into it.

3. MCOE/MCOG/Alliance Planning Grant

- a. Steve Turner reported that the final grant application was submitted to Caltrans after a few last minute edits by MCOG; there was a change earlier that made MCOE the sub applicant so that their hired consultant could support the schools, with corresponding changes to the budget and work schedule.
- b. The grant was also forwarded to the Director of Facilities and Transportation in the Department of Education and to Sunne McPeak, President and CEO of the California Emerging Technology Fund. In speaking with Sunne at a conference a few weeks ago, Jim reported that Sunne was very excited about this grant proposal.
- c. Steve would still like to suggest that we make an effort to support Phil's suggestion of getting support from the 16 county superregion; Jim said that we could send a letter or email, but that they don't know the Alliance and wondered why Phil doesn't send the request as it's his agency. Steve thought that maybe it wasn't appropriate for Phil to send a request seeking support for his proposal as it might appear to be self-serving.
- d. Jim mentioned that about five years ago the four counties of Mendocino, Humboldt, Trinity, and Del Norte had a \$500,000 grant to study rural broadband as a pilot project for the Governor's task force – Redwood Coast Connect. We have some contacts , and will post those documents on the website.
- e. Mike sent the grant application to a Sonoma County lobbyist Paul Yoder who didn't understand why the Caltrans Eureka region would accept the grant but not the San Francisco Caltrans region. Paul wants to be kept in the loop, along with other key players in Sonoma County (Supervisor Efren Carillo, Jim Leddy). They are anxiously waiting to see if our grant is successful, and if so, Sonoma County may want to partake if there is another round of funding.
- f. The grant application and supporting materials will be posted on the Alliance website soon.

4. Community Foundation Challenge Grant

- a. There is a meeting scheduled for April 15th with Susanne Norgard to talk about how we will publicize the CF challenge grant.

5. Opportunities

- a. Trish reported about a church in the Laytonville area that is currently paying about \$1000/month for satellite services in which they still feel limited due to the data caps. She asked Brian for technical suggestions to pass on to them; Greg suggested that we put out a "mini" notice-of-opportunity to our vendor list since the Alliance is vendor neutral and technology-neutral.
- b. John Kuhry suggested using change.org if we want to have a campaign for our legislators; it would be a simple one-stop place, and it goes out to a national audience. Jim asked John if he could put together a write-up to send to everyone. After some discussion, Jim asked Carole to take on this task.

- c. John also suggested Reddit as another good place to post, as it is a movement to create a peer-to-peer internet.
- d. Dan reported that the BoS letter in opposition to the ViaSat grant proposal is on their agenda for their upcoming meeting. He also reported that Mendocino County has re-joined the Regional Council of Rural Counties (RCRC). The county had a membership for a while, but let it lapse for economic reasons. However, when an advocate for RCRC talked to them, he was knowledgeable about broadband and the RCRC was willing to help move the broadband issue forward; they are statewide, so now Mendocino County is pursuing the RCRC as a possible advocate for GBB and rural broadband in general.
- e. The Alliance public outreach meeting scheduled for May 10th will be dedicated to a single issue: public access television. All three stations from the county and board members will attend, along with guest Sean McLaughlin from Access Humboldt. Jim was very excited that Sean could attend, as he is a dynamic speaker, on national media committees, and feels that Sean's experience would be very valuable for this meeting. The public is invited to attend.
- f. Dan Hamburg plans to attend this meeting and supervisors John McCowen and Dan Gjerde also have interest in this issue. The question arose as to Brown Act requirements. If only two supervisors are attending, it's not an issue. If three supervisors plan to attend, then it would require posting as a public meeting. Dan will double-check with county counsel, but believes that it is ok as long as it is appropriately posted within the correct timeframe.
- g. County Librarian Mindy Kittay reported that a lot of people use the internet at the library because they don't have internet at home. This is an important resource for people because the library is quiet for study or business (unlike a noisy internet café) and should be viewed as important infrastructure. The libraries also have meeting rooms, so the library should be remembered as a good place to reach people for education about broadband.

6. **Committee reports - none**

7. **Meeting Adjourned at 11:30**

Next meeting: April 12th, 26th (April 19th meeting cancelled)