

Steering Committee Meeting Notes

Friday, May 17th 10:00 am – 11:30 am

Fort Bragg Town Hall

262 N. Main Street, Fort Bragg, CA 95460

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)

1. Call to Order: 10:00 am

- a. Attendees: Brian Churm, Dan Hamburg, Greg Jirak, Jim Moorehead, Shirley Freriks (Mendocino Coast Broadband), Susanne Norgard, Trish Steel
- b. Call-in: Mike Nicholls
- c. Guests: Dave Turner (Mayor of Fort Bragg), Scott Deitz (City Council of Fort Bragg), Ginny Feth-Michel (Assistant to the City Manager), Mitch Sprague (MCN manager), reporter from the Advocate News, Mark Ruedrich (President of North Coast Brewing Company)
- d. Changes to agenda: none; we hope to take care of Alliance business quickly so we can devote most of the meeting to strategic broadband planning for Fort Bragg

2. Golden Bear Broadband update

- a. Shirley asked about the status of the challenges to the GBB application. The seven incumbents who are challenging GBB (including Verizon, AT&T and Comcast here in Mendocino County) are being very aggressive in their challenges with lobbyists at the CPUC in San Francisco trying to stop GBB. They are working on a “dual strategy” both directly challenging the GBB application and lobbying to add amendments to SB740 (the funding bill) that will *remove* \$100 million from available funding for rural broadband. If SB740 passes with these amendments and the “underserved” areas are removed from funding, it will kill GBB by removing millions of dollars out of their business plan. Of the GBB housing counts of 153,000 homes that need service, two thirds are underserved (Some information provided from the Independent Coast Observer article of 05/17/13).
- b. If you overlay the data on maps of the GBB coverage route, there are tremendous pockets of underserved areas. Removing these areas defeats much of the purpose of GBB and kills their business model.
- c. The Independent Coast Observer printed an article in their May 17th 2013 edition by writer J. Stephen McLaughlin entitled “\$100 million cut from rural broadband bill” that talks about this issue, and also is quoted as saying that “Padilla’s office did not return calls by press time to explain the origin of or reasoning behind the amendments.”
- d. Dave Turner, Mayor of Fort Bragg tells of trying to get 1 GB of service for his business from AT&T and was quoted a price of \$15,000/month. That is how telecoms can say that they provide service, but in reality service is not available because of the outrageous price. As a point of reference, 1Gig IP circuit prices in the bay area are in the range \$500- 1000/month.

3. **SB 331 (Liu) CENIC service to all public libraries**

- a. This bill would have provided 2.25 million dollars in funding to allow CENIC to provide broadband service to all public libraries, and the Alliance provided a strong letter of endorsement for it.
- b. Unfortunately, the bill is not in Governor Brown's May revise budget, so it looks like it will not be funded.

4. **Sonoma Connect**

- a. Mike provided an update for Sonoma Connect by first thanking Jim for coming down for their first meeting and speaking to the Sonoma group about the history of the Broadband Alliance in Mendocino County. Jim provided our background and history, how we have organized ourselves, what we are doing, and the issues and pitfalls that we have encountered.
- b. Jim was interviewed recently for a broadband article, and the topic went to the issue of public outreach. He mentioned that Sonoma is now organizing, and that each of their five supervisors has appointed two representatives to be on this committee. They hope to emulate what we are doing here in Mendocino County, because the people are starting to feel that citizen action is the only way they will get broadband in many of the rural areas.

5. **MCOE CalTrans Transportation Planning Grant**

- a. This \$110 thousand grant request was submitted to Caltrans recently, and was a collaborative effort between Mendocino County Office of Education (MCOE), the Alliance, and the Mendocino Council of Governments (MCOG). If funded, we expect that one outcome will go a long way toward addressing the "mapping problem".
- b. The "mapping problem" refers to the fact that federal maps show Mendocino County with 71.6% of their housing units having broadband service with at least 6 Mb/sec download. The Alliance estimates that the real percentage is somewhere between 1/4 and 1/3. No one really knows the "ground truth" percentage of broadband coverage, but because of the inaccurate data, Mendocino County is losing out on grants meant for rural broadband deployment. <http://www.mendocinobroadband.org/the-map-problem/>
- c. In the meanwhile, Greg is part of the new CPUC mapping working group for help in providing ground truth data into the CPUC database with participation by the various broadband consortia. The CPUC has not actually stated that anything is wrong with their maps, but their actions tell us that at least they recognize that there is a need to add ground-based data.
- d. They are proposing that the CPUC maps use coverage at the parcel level instead of the census block group (CBG) level which is currently being used. The problem with the CBG level is that if service is provided to one house within the CBG, then the entire CBG is considered "served."
- e. A general discussion about the "digital divide" then followed, with a reminder that the Alliance has a new educational page on our website with a current definition, and our view of the twelve components of the digital divide that must all be addressed when

trying to eliminate the digital divide. <http://www.mendocinobroadband.org/the-digital-divide/>

- f. The component of affordability was briefly discussed as it was brought up that there are groups that are falling through the cracks, such as low income families and seniors on fixed incomes. We need to find a way to tap into sources of subsidized funding and set up services with local providers for these groups.
 - g. Mike said that in Guerneville 86% of the school kids are part of the free/reduced lunch program (the number is 63% for Mendocino County). Sonoma Connect is trying to work with Comcast to eliminate the 90-day waiting period for families that already have Comcast but want to switch over to the Comcast Internet Essentials program for low income families, the program that the FCC required as a part of the merger when Comcast acquired NBC Universal. The waiting period is a barrier to families being able to join the program.
6. **Fort Bragg Broadband Planning meeting – Mayer Dave Turner and Councilmember Scott Deitz**
- a. High-speed communications is vital to attracting the right businesses/technology to the area that will create a sustainable economy and avoid the “boom and bust” cycles that have happened in the past.
 - b. Ironically, the Fort Bragg City Hall is across the street from the AT&T Central Office, and they have fiber through the town but it is “off limits” and not being made available. This is a major problem – “dark” fiber (fiber that is not being used, it is “unlit” and therefore “dark”) exists throughout the county but the incumbent service providers will not make it available.
7. **Meeting Adjourned at 12:00 noon.**

**No meeting next Friday, May 24th due to Memorial Day holiday.
Next meeting will be on May 31st and then June 7th**