

Steering Committee Meeting Notes

Friday, May 31st, 2013 10:00 am – 11:30 am

The Community Foundation of Mendocino County

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1. Call to Order: 10:00 am

- a. Attendees: Brian Churm, Carole Brodsky, Greg Jirak, Jacob Turner, Jim Moorehead, John Goldsmith, John Kuhry, Mike Nicholls, Randy MacDonald, Susanne Norgard, Trish Steel
- b. Call-in: Mitch Drake (CEO, Golden Bear Broadband), Steve Turner (MCOE)
- c. Guest: Tami Bartolomei (Program Director, Office of Emergency Services)
- d. Changes to agenda: none

2. Golden Bear Broadband update – Mitch Drake

- a. Currently there is not much to report; from a business planning perspective they are on hold until they know which portion of their application will receive recommendation for funding from the CASF staff. Of their 24 segments, there are two segments that look like they could be approved, with one of those subject to additional challenges from the carrier Frontier. It seems that the carriers are still being allowed to submit challenge data for areas where they have facilities or consider “served”; this is disturbing, because if an area is determined to be out of capacity, the carriers are going out in field and upgrading their networks. We are assuming that they are adding capacity as fast as they can to counter what Golden Bear is trying to do.
- b. Jim added an anecdotal story: he lives four miles east of Mendocino, and in the last three weeks he has seen two new AT&T bucket trucks on Little Lake Road repairing copper wires. The irony is that they are repairing copper wires that they want to abandon. To Jim, it’s self-evident why they are doing it: there are photographs of frayed AT&T wires that are getting circulated. And although the Alliance can’t prove it, it seems that the telcos are doing everything they can to counter Golden Bear but not really fix the problem.
- c. Mitch added that one thing that he admires about the Alliance is that we are looking to not only fix the current broadband problem, but we are looking to solve the problem in the long term. Copper is antiquated technology so we have to look beyond copper for the solution.
- d. Mitch is scheduled to meet commission staff next week, and he will lay out his drawing and will be able to present his case. At that point, Golden Bear really needs to know which direction to go.
- e. In Sonoma County, Steve Sharpe has been following up with their county planning department equivalent to see if there is any activity along their portion of the R1CP, such as which permits have been pulled by the telcos for new cell tower construction.

Mike suggested that we do the same here in Mendocino County, and connect with Dusty Duley. Trish will do this.

- f. Telcos can pull permits and stake out territory but not plan on really doing anything. This would not be a new strategy; a few years back AT&T was awarded CASF funds for deployment projects for nine towns. AT&T sat on those funds during the application period, preventing those funds from being available to other carriers for projects, and then when the funding period was over, they returned the money without doing anything.

3. **Senate Bill 740 - update**

- a. SB 740 as originally written would modify eligibility requirements and add funding to the California Advanced Services Fund (CASF). This would provide the needed flexibility to help the state achieve its broadband objectives and the goal of reaching 98% broadband deployment and 80% adoption for California by 2015 [goals acknowledged by the California Broadband Council (CBC), California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC), and California Emerging Technology Fund (CETF)].
- b. Amendments were subsequently added that basically gutted the money out of it, and this modified version was passed by the Assembly. If the 100 million is not put back in when it is approved, then it would be really bad news. Currently there is not enough money in the CASF accounts for all the requests: there is \$240 million worth of PUC requests and only \$150 million in the account. Golden Bear alone is a \$119 million request.
- c. Greg added that it's even worse than that, because even if middle mile backhaul is funded, there are lots of miles of county backbone that will rely on CASF funding to be deployed.

4. **Office of Emergency Services – Randy MacDonald, Greg Jirak, Tami Bartolomei**

- a. Tami Bartolomei is the new Program Director of the Office of Emergency Services (OES), and the Alliance was appreciative of her making the time to attend today's meeting to learn how the Alliance and OES can work together for mutual benefit.
- b. Jim provided a bit of history of the Alliance for Tami, including the fact that the Alliance has a CASF broadband planning grant. He also posted our "ideal" fiber backbone map for the county (a work in progress), which shows where we feel it would be important to have fiber, and the R1CP route which includes 190 miles of fiber. The R1CP starts in Laytonville, runs west over the Branscomb Road to Highway 1, south to Jenner, back east to Petaluma with a spur to Bodega Bay. The R1CP is currently a part of the Golden Bear project.
- c. Jim continued with the history of the Alliance interest in working with OES, including his presentation at Sheriff Allmans monthly police chiefs meeting some months back. The main point that he made at this meeting is: we can't plan for fiber to places that we don't know exist, so we need to get all those locations where it would be important for emergency responders to have proper communication onto the Alliance spreadsheet of Anchor Institutions for our fiber backbone planning map.

- d. There is a microwave system currently in use that has addressed some of the communication problems, but it doesn't have the full coverage that is needed, nor does it have the redundancy that is required for a backup in case one part of the system goes down.
- e. Greg then gave a review of the start of the Alliance Broadband Access Inventory (BAI). We started with a 2011 web-based, anonymous survey to gather anecdotal evidence about what sort of broadband access people had in the county. We received over 2,000 responses, and the general consensus was that access was "not good". It gave us a better understanding of one aspect of the broadband problem in this county: advertised service is not the same as actual service provided. Maybe this is why a very recent survey ranks broadband service providers the very last in terms of public satisfaction. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/05/22/internet-service-providers-hated_n_3320473.html Unfortunately, the official CPUC / FCC broadband maps are based on carrier's advertised coverage and speeds, unverified by any independent third party. And unfortunately again, funding depends upon this data.
- f. Since that start, the Alliance has composed a BAI survey that has included a good representation from Healthcare, Libraries, Schools, but we are still lacking information from Emergency Services. Ideally, we would like to understand what broadband is currently available for each site, what the needs are for each site, and have those sites become part of our Anchor Institutions.
- g. Part of the reason this information has been difficult to collect is because of security concerns, and the Alliance understands this. We are very careful about the data we collect, and that data is considered confidential and is not made available to the public.
- h. If the OES would identify every physical location and inventory it for broadband access, we can help collect, compile, and organize the data in a way that is meaningful. The Alliance has a data input form on their website for locations to download, fill out, and then email back to the Alliance. Several months back Sergeant Shannon Barney was going to ask all the various OES site locations to fill out this information and submit it to the Alliance, but he subsequently changed jobs and this data still needs to be collected. <http://www.mendocinobroadband.org/bai/>
- i. Randy MacDonald then led a discussion that included background about his role in the Alliance and the national FirstNet program (see item k). Randy has been the assistant Fire chief of the Comptche Fire Department for twelve years, and was appointed to the county Fire Chiefs Communication Committee. He is also on the county Public Safety Communications Committee, which is composed of people that have responsibility in public safety in some manner, such as fire or EMS.
- j. Randy stated the problem clearly: this county is underserved in broadband, we have a low population, huge geographic barriers, and a weak economy. This is not a healthy situation for the market to solve our problem. Public safety also does not have the resources to address the problem, and no dedicated personnel working on the broadband problem. A few years ago, Sergeant Shannon Barney asked Randy to be the liaison between Public Safety and the Broadband Alliance, and that was how Randy came to be involved with the Alliance. Also, Mendocino County is also part of the Northern California Area Planning Group (NCAPG), which serves to coordinate all the

various voices in public safety. This is important so that we have a plan when the funding money comes down from the federal level to the local level.

- k. The money from the federal level is coming from the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA). The NTIA is the Executive Branch agency that is principally responsible for advising the President on telecommunications and information policy issues. Within the NTIA, a program called the First Responder Network Authority, or “FirstNet” was created from the Middle Class Tax Relief and Job Creation Act of 2012 as an independent authority to provide emergency responders with the first high-speed, nationwide network dedicated to public safety.
<http://www.ntia.doc.gov/category/firstnet>
- l. FirstNet is now up and running, and has been promised six billion dollars for a wireless broadband network throughout the United States for public safety that calls for public/private partnership that will benefit citizen in general as well as public safety (although public safety is its first priority). Randy attended the last NCAPG meeting on April 11th in Lake County, and their business model is coming out in 45 days. There are still a lot of questions that don’t have answers yet around issues of funding, but the chair of NCAPG says that it is the best example of good cooperation between industry, government, and public safety that she has seen in her extensive career. It looks to be the largest telecommunications project in history and the intent is to get coverage to all the isolated valleys in this country.
- m. Mendocino County is taking this effort seriously, and we need to determine what our public safety needs are, and what other concomitant efforts are under way that we should try to partner with. Working with the Broadband Alliance, with Supervisors Hamburg and McCowen on the Alliance Board, is the main cooperative effort.
- n. Northern California’s FirstNet liaison is Karen Wong, Director of Public Safety and Communications in Sacramento, and she has 300 people who work for her. She is responsible for receiving the six million in funds that will be distributed in the state in June/July for planning purposes. We are looking ahead and have a three-point plan for deploying FirstNet in Mendocino County: 1) leverage all existing public safety facilities, and they should all be served by FirstNet, 2) light up all the significant roadways in the county, and 3) find the gaps in service and work with local landowners to identify physical locations on their properties (such as mountaintops) where we could place transmission facilities.
- o. Randy pointed out why it’s so important to serve all these small isolated valleys: in an emergency such as a fire, having “real time, see-through-the-smoke and on-the-ground data” about a fire would be a huge benefit. Our Fire Chief and Public Safety Committee have signed off on this effort, and now when the money comes Mendocino County need to go to Karen Wong and let her know that we have a plan. Randy invited Tami to join him and others in a trip over to meet Karen.
- p. Our message to Karen will be: Mendocino County has significant broadband needs that are currently unmet, and we have well-organized public/private sector groups that have been working together for years, so we are a touch point. And finally, we have a plan, and we need some of those planning monies to hire a consultant to take our three points and flesh it out in terms of time, feasibility, cost, where needs are, etc.

- q. Public safety has their own needs, but we all should work together in an ongoing county effort. It is not helpful for the different groups to work in a vacuum. FirstNet was conceived to use existing facilities and to leverage partnerships, so this is one piece of the solution for adequate broadband for Mendocino County. With these planning monies public safety should be able to coordinate with the Alliance to figure out what our needs are, such as backbone, middle mile and last mile.
- r. From the recent NCAPG meeting, California will receive \$5.8 million for the state and local grant implementation program. Mendocino County wants to work with NCAPG because they have a successful track record, while at the same time presenting ourselves uniquely. In July there is a conference on Inter-operability that will incorporate broadband, and Randy will try to attend.
- s. Brian, the Technical Committee Chair of the Alliance, asked what exactly is meant by the word “planning” and does that include the design? The design has to be done by engineers, and he doesn’t see the politicians in Sacramento being able to design, so he sees them sub-contracting the design out. Will each area get a block of money, and then who gets to decide how the plan is designed? Randy said that these questions as to how it will all work are very important, and that the hope is that we are at the table getting answers to these questions. Randy will send the exact details of the grant to the Steering Committee so we can at least see what is allowed and what is not in the grant itself.
- t. Randy doesn’t have answers to questions such as who gets to do the work, whether the decision will be made in Sacramento, and will we have local input. But, we want to help to drive the conversation rather than being told.
- u. Another question to consider: is FirstNet being created as a wireless telco, or as a body to sub-contract this out to one of the big four? Randy said that even at the National level they don’t have answers yet, as their business model isn’t done. The answer to this question could pre-empt everything. There will be lobbyists for the big four in Washington asking for these contracts. They have entire divisions devoted to government contracts.
- v. The concerns and points that Brian made underscores how important it is for groups like the Alliance to be at the table for these important decisions. If our groups are sitting at the table, and we know that our input is going into decisions about the Request for Proposals (RFPs) that are going out, then requests for conditions such as “all middle mile fiber routes have to be open and neutral” would be important to include. That way a carrier can’t light up a tower for public safety, but then refuse to sell the fiber to local providers who need bandwidth to provide service to our citizens.
- w. Jim suggested that because Brian has such extensive experience and knowledge in this area, that he works with us and develops some key points that the Alliance takes to their meeting with Karen Wong regarding questions of local decision making and contracts. If the goal of FirstNet is to get wireless access to all the roadways, then that means there needs to be towers with fiber to them. If we start giving feedback to Karen about what we really need here, and if enough other groups also do this, then we may be able to get good results out of it despite what the telcos are doing in Washington (their trying to take control of it). Brian is happy to put together a series of

questions and points to take to Karen. This is similar to what is happening with the CPUP mapping working group that has just formed.

- x. We will need to take different approaches depending on what the FirstNet business model is.
 - i. If we are just giving input into the bigger process, then we will be saying we need coverage at specific sites, and including conditions under which the service is delivered. It will be important that we keep pushing to make sure that our ideas keep floating upwards and are not pushed down or dismissed. This information is then sent to someone to construct.
 - ii. If our county gets an award and we are constructing the network, then that's another approach.
- y. We don't want the FirstNet program to create "silos" like the E-rate program did with the schools, because ultimately this makes it harder for universal broadband deployment. In the E-rate situation, many of the schools received their required access, but the large carriers do not make service available to the surrounding community, and in addition, also deny fiber access to smaller local providers who want to provide such service. We need to make sure that the FirstNet doesn't become another "cherry-picking" situation where all this money is spent to light up roadways and towers for public safety, but then there is no access for the local providers to provide service to our citizens.
- z. In summary: although the potential for skepticism is high, we need to go meet with Karen to get on her map and get a contact as a liaison. We will present the fact that we have recognized needs, and that we are organized, united, and we have a plan. We can then ask our questions and get a better picture of what Karen sees as the model for how FirstNet will work in California.
 - aa. There is also another piece of this picture: states can use the National model, or states can opt out of the National model and use their own as long as it meets the performance level of the national model. California is looking to opt out.
 - bb. There is a statewide group (Cal seek?) of which NCAPG is a part of, that works on the issue of inter-operability for Public Safety. Test areas for the California model are being developed in the LA and bay areas.
 - cc. Brian pointed out that models developed for LA County and other densely-populated areas would never work in our county, for obvious reasons. Instead, we should be a test area for rural areas.
 - dd. The importance of language in these contracts was again discussed to help Tami understand what happened with E-rate. The E-rate contracts are negotiated between ATT and the schools as a stand-alone contract, and it's good for the school but not the surrounding community which is left without service, and then ATT can then claim that area as "served". We don't want this sort of situation to happen with FirstNet contracts.
 - ee. John suggested that all the emergency volunteers in our county (such as fire) are enough reason for providing access to the public. Greg added that in Brooktrails even some paid staff who are emergency responders don't have broadband at their homes.

- ff. Tami stated her concern about need for access because the state is moving all the Emergency Operations Centers (EOCs) to a web-based system, including all forms and reporting. Mendocino County is putting mobile units in all the cars and trucks to report situation status through this web EOC, which then reports out to the fire stations and everyone else.
- gg. Discussion turned to copper services, in that there is an “end time” to the copper lines and therefore landlines. If you only have copper to a facility, because the copper lines will be abandoned by the telecos, in five years there is no guarantee that you will have a dial tone.
- hh. This is important when we identify our needs and Anchor Institutions: if we have a site that only has copper today, then in five years that site could be completely disconnected. We need to think in terms of being site specific and know what sites are vulnerable when copper is gone. We need to continue putting together our BAI for the entire county.
- ii. Some sort of emergency responding device would be important for the average citizens who have lost their landlines, so that they can at least call CalFire. If people can't report fires as soon as they see them, fires can become disastrous.
- jj. Again, because FirstNet knows that they have only a fraction of the money that they need, they will look to leverage existing networks however possible, and have a business model that public safety can subscribe to. There are a lot of questions, but if we incorporate Brian's insights into a discussion with Karen and others, maybe we can have some influence at the state level. FirstNet is required to consult with localities and Tribes. This problem will not be solved at the national level, so we should be engaging our state representatives.
- kk. First net is a potential solution to our county broadband problem, as one of the first needs FirstNet should recognize is how to link our various communities with middle mile. If that middle mile infrastructure is created, and is done in such a way as to keep it open (not private) then it can help solve the broadband problem, especially if Golden Bear is not approved. If GBB is approved, then FirstNet could become a customer of GBB.
- ll. Action Plan:
 - i. Randy will schedule a meeting with Karen in June, and Greg, Shannon, Jim, and Tami are willing to go along.
 - ii. With Brian's input, we will come up with our talking points and questions for Karen, and get a report back to everyone about the meeting.
 - iii. Sonoma County can participate by connecting with their OES coordinator, as they are already part of the Alliance. Sonoma County is in a different planning area, but that might be useful for leveraging opportunities.
- mm. The Northern California Area Planning Group has been successful in that they have created a matrix for when grant monies come down, with projects in the pipeline. As a result, they have gotten a large share of grant money, and this good track record makes a good pitch.

- nn. Jim asked Mitch if Golden Bear has worked with this group or if their maps overlap. Mitch reported that they declined to endorse GBB because they were heavily dependent on microwave radio and didn't seem interested in backbone capabilities. He also thought that maybe it was a money issue too, in that they have very little budget and were hesitant to get involved in anything that could eat up what little budget that they had, and maybe they thought Mitch was asking for something other than an endorsement.
- oo. Randy confirmed this report, saying that it's kind of characteristic of public safety in that they don't see how broadband all is that practical, so there's some education that needs to happen. Because Randy has contacts within this group, he will see if he can make some progress in this regard.

5. Next Steps in working with Tami

- a. Tami will look at what the security concerns are around these issues, including Homeland Security. Many of these infrastructure pieces are already part of the public record. Greg added that public safety needs to do this inventory internally for their own sake, and whether they choose to disclose that info to the Alliance is another matter.
- b. In Brian's business he often sees "security " as an excuse to hide behind not doing anything, but even at the highest security all we would need is a longitude, latitude, and capacity and nothing more about it. That would be enough for planning needs.
- c. Steve added that Tami may not be aware of it, but the Hazard Mitigation Inventory is being completed by Howard at the Department of Transportation and it has a list of all the critical facilities all over the county; Steve believe it includes things Tami is looking for, and Tami should have access to the completed draft file. Tami will check on this, and Greg and Trish will be Tami's contacts for this data collection.

6. Fort Bragg Broadband Planning meeting – May 17th, 2013

- a. Jim gave an update about the Alliance meeting last week held at the Fort Bragg Town Hall. The City of Fort Bragg is frustrated with lack of economic development, and they have identified that they need fiber infrastructure to improve their business climate. Jim suggested we have a meeting over there, and help them do a proper broadband plan for the City of Fort Bragg
- b. They need backhaul and want to lay fiber in their Central Business District, but need to connect it to the outside world. Greg suggested that they put together a one-page, easily understandable broadband plan for the city.
- c. The meeting was very good, and it was suggested that the Alliance hold meetings over there more often. The city is organized, and they are getting more knowledgeable about these issues, and really taking their broadband education seriously. They are ready to move on some of these issues!
- d. Mike commented that the coastal communities in Sonoma County are unincorporated, which makes it difficult to get anything done.

7. Committee Reports/Other

- a. Carole reported that they have drafted a letter for Congressman Huffman which asks him to host a town hall meeting focusing on broadband issues. The letter has been received by his staff, and they will get back to us about it.
- b. Thanks to Congressman Huffman's efforts, there has been some movement on the Eb5 application. Joseph Kong is fairly optimistic and is expecting some type of response next week.
- c. Trish reported that Congressman Huffman was at Laytonville High School last Thursday for at least an hour to give awards for students who participated in the Congressional Art Competition and the Veteran's project, and her son had a photo opportunity with the Congressman because he picked out his hand-made guitar to play. Trish had the chance to meet him because of this, and she thanked him for his strong support of the Alliance.

8. Meeting Adjourned at 11:30

**Next meeting: June 7th and June 28th
No Meeting June 14th and June 21st !**