

Steering Committee Meeting Notes

Friday, October 4th, 2013 10:00 am – 11:30 am
The Community Foundation of Mendocino County
204 S. Oak Street, Ukiah, CA 95482 (707) 468-9882

New Dial In Number

Dial In # (760) 569-7225, Participant Access Code: 108 1131#

1. Call to Order: 10:00 am

- a. Attendees: **Dan Hamburg** (Mendocino County 5th District Supervisor), **Jim Moorehead** (Alliance Chairman), **John Goldsmith** (Alliance Financial Advisor), **John Kuhry** (Economic Development and Financing Corporation), **Mike Nicholls** (Access Sonoma Broadband Co-chair), **Susanne Norgard** (Executive Director, Community Foundation of Mendocino County), **Trish Steel** (Alliance Administrative Coordinator)
- b. Call-in: **Greg Jirak** (Alliance Strategic Chair), **Brian Churm** (Alliance Technology Chair), Butte County Office of Education
- c. Changes to agenda: none

2. Broadband Coalition of Northern California Counties

- a. Trish reported that the Coalition has received five support letters in the last few days in response to our request that was sent out to supporters of Golden Bear Broadband to also support the Coalition and our statement that “Substandard broadband damages the regional economy”.
- b. We are continuing our outreach efforts, and will use these support letters to take to the meeting with CPUC Commissioner Sandoval in Redding.

3. Golden Bear Broadband (GBB)

- a. Mitch is not on the call today, so we don’t have an update.
- b. We know that Mitch is working to tie up “loose ends” in gaining support for his project.

4. Access Sonoma Broadband (ASB)

- a. No further update

5. SB 740 (Padilla) – update

- a. The bill, which had been on the Governor’s desk for quite a few days, was signed yesterday, 10/3/13.
- b. The Alliance is receiving requests from media for our reaction to the passage of the bill. At this point, we are not clear ourselves what the implications may be, as there was a lot of amendments/changes put into the bill due to lobbying pressure.
- c. One change allows the carriers will have the first right of refusal to provide service to an area proposed in a new CASF application. Under these new rules, for example, the Boonville project that Willits Online submitted, the CPUC would go first to ATT and give them the chance to upgrade their service before they would approve Mike’s application.

- d. There is also not enough funding in the bill to adequately address all the needs in the rural areas of the state, and to close the digital divide.
- e. Trish will write a draft press release that we will send out next week.

6. Opportunities

- a. The Mendocino Council of Governments/Mendocino County Office of Education/Broadband Alliance grant application to the CalTrans Environmental Justice Grant program was denied. In fact, none of the Environmental Justice applications that MCOG submitted were approved.
- b. Of course, we are all disappointed, as we thought it would be an interesting and important project that would provide ground truth data to add to the CPUC broadband mapping database.
- c. However, there were some positives from the grant application:
 - i. It strengthened our relationship with MCOE, and we also really appreciate all the work that Steve Turner put into the application.
 - ii. We have established a good working relationship with MCOG.
 - iii. We believe important political points were scored; we hope that the CA legislature, CETF, and CPUC noticed that since the official broadband service maps are based on advertised coverage and speeds, inaccurate to the point that all progress is hampered, the Alliance *resorted to applying to another state agency to get funding to help us fix the problem.*

7. Leveraging of the Alliance – How to best do this?

- a. The meeting went into an unexpected direction when comments by John Kuhry sparked a discussion that went into strategic planning.
- b. John felt that the Alliance could be a better advocate to bring attention to the digital divide as not just a problem of lack of physical infrastructure, but as a socio-economic issue. We should try to change the thinking of some of our institutions and leverage our influence and connections to get access. He used libraries as an example, that we should help change the thinking of libraries as more than “just books”.
- c. John also felt like we should pick the “low-hanging” fruit and deal with more local issues, rather than fighting ATT at the FCC level and becoming involved in political issues such as SB 740. He also gave the example that he met a local ISP provider while out with his dog, and this provider wanted access to a CalFire tower for his business but was not having success. According to John, the provider had asked the Alliance for help but got no response. John suggested that we should focus on issues such as these, and use our political pressure to force Calfire to open access in these types of situations.
- d. Greg and Jim responded to the specifics of these examples. Greg stated that our new county librarian, Mindy Kittay, is completely aboard on the broadband issue and doing a great job of doing all she can to bring our libraries into the future; however, you can’t adopt something that you don’t have, and right now we don’t have the infrastructure and access, so we have to focus on that.
- e. Jim said that Cathy Emerson has been doing community outreach meetings that focus on adoption, but that again, so often there is “nothing to adopt.” He also stated that

our weekly meetings are open to the public, and anyone is welcome to add to the agenda. We do community outreach: we just did a tutorial on net neutrality last Friday, and that just yesterday Jim was interviewed on the local radio station KZYX.

- f. Greg said that with northern California having less than 5% of the population, we don't HAVE the political capital to force a large bureaucracy such as CalFire to open up access.
- g. Jim remembers talking to Nathan Cook at 101 Netlink / AV Broadband about a year ago regarding access to a tower on Greenwood Ridge, and felt we made an effort to assist him but does not remember the details. Jim and Trish will research the details on the Nathan Cook request and report at the next meeting.
- h. The Alliance is run mostly by volunteers, and Jim and Greg do the majority of the "heavy lifting" on issues so it's a matter of limited resources and how best to use them. Jim suggested that John's ideas represent a change in strategy, and that the Alliance Executive Committee would need to get involved with strategic planning.
- i. JK wondered why if we take on a political issue such as SB740, then why not explore more local issues, and work on viable projects that can get some concrete results.
- j. Greg admitted that we did not want to get involved in SB740, but it's more apt to say that we were dragged into it: if SB740 went down, then Golden Bear went down so we felt we had no choice.
- k. John Goldsmith summarized the bigger picture be presented by asking what sort of public image we want to have. It's a strategic question; are we a forum for individuals who are running up against problems to come and get help?
- l. John K feels that we need to address the situation in the community, as he feels that less and less broadband operators, such as Willits Online and 101 Netlink, are finding us helpful. Is that the perception? He doesn't know, he is asking that question. He is interested in outcomes, and that means our broadband providers. Where do we apply our limited resources to get broadband to people? Where are the places where we can get traction and build a bigger and stronger coalition? There are many businesses paying "through the nose" and they need help. He is not criticizing the Alliance, but sees a lot of effort focused on GBB and SB740, and wants more input from people on the ground who are trying to implement broadband (the local providers).
- m. A survey was suggested as a way to find out (Susanne); another idea was to have a special meeting.
- n. The Alliance was open to both of these ideas. Susanne asked if John would be willing to reach out to local providers and to get some people to attend our meeting.
- o. Jim is open to having a special meeting, with the goal of connecting entrepreneurs with ideas and money (the EDFC mission) if JK is willing to take this on.
- p. The survey idea would be to ask, "What do you think we can be doing for you? What would you like to see us do for you?" If fixing these smaller "potholes" gets us closer to the goal, then JK feels that is an okay use of resources.
- q. John G felt that however we approach it (survey or meeting, or both) it's always good to have an open forum, see what is going on, have an understanding of needs, and get feedback.
- r. Jim is willing to revisit the CalFire situation, and see what happened with that. Dan has had contact with the CalFire Mendocino County Chief, and will contact him. JK said that

two selling points to remember when talking with CalFire is that 1) they have an unpopular fire tax, and 2) better public access to broadband gives them better access to firefighting information.

- s. John was willing to work on this and prepare a survey for both counties (Sonoma and Mendocino), as outcomes are important: leveraging our skills and resources, however limited that they may be, for broadband training and more people with broadband access.
- t. This survey will be for not only for people putting broadband in (the ISPs), but also for people involved in purchasing broadband such as county IT people and Emergency Services IT people, and to get feedback from them.
- u. John will coordinate with Trish on this.
- v. Trish will get contact information from Sonoma County for ISPs and IT people.
- w. It was agreed that the “silo” mentality is and continues to be a big problem – everyone is doing their own thing and agencies have no incentive to collaborate. Public agencies are notorious for wanting to keep everyone else at bay due to security concerns. Security concerns are legitimate but can be addressed. One thing to remember in this frustrating “silo” mentality is that “regimes change, people change, times change”, so we should continue to ask the questions, reach out, invite dialog, keep pressure on, and create “silo-melting” initiatives. Continue to schedule meetings even if we don’t hear anything back.
- x. John G commended everyone, Jim and Greg especially, for all the time and effort that they volunteer to the Alliance and understands everyone’s frustration. The incumbents have unlimited money to push their agenda. It might be worthwhile for us to re-look at our results, and see how we can re-direct our efforts to get better results even if they are small. Everyone would feel better if we could actually see tangible results.

8. Meeting Adjourned at 11:10

Next meeting: Friday, October 11th