**SC BAT Meeting Notes DRAFT**

**March 9, 2017; 1-3 PM**

**Stevens County IT Conference Room**

Participants:

Debra Hansen. Mayor Dorothy Knauss

Bert Klimas Dave Klimas

Bryan Lentes, NEWHP Trevor Sellars

Monica Babine\* Amanda Six

Jessica Varang\* Brandon Raney\*

Mark Curtis Andrew Engel

Theron DePaulo\* Wes McCart

Jeremy Stroud\*, USDA Rural Development Ted Anderson, USDA Rural Development

\**Participated via phone*

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY/TL;DR**

* Welcome to new member Brian Lentes who will be representing Desiree Sweeney/Northeast Washington Health Programs.
* Welcome USDA’s Rural Development Ted Anderson and Jeremy Stroud. Jeremy is the Liaison for the Spokane Tribe’s Promise Zone.
* Conference call scheduled for information about a possible tax incentive plan that would allow communities to form/fund a Broadband Utility District (Item a)
* Mapping update from Trevor and Mark (Item b)
* Stevens County/Spokane Tribe Scoop Mountain update (Item c)
* Legislative update from Monica (Item d)
* Wes shared results of his trip to Washington, D.C. (Item e)
* Mayor Knauss updated us on AWC/Next Century Cities (Item f)
* Monica and Bert: the NTIA/Community Connect Initiative expected kickoff in May; FirstNet and OneNet progress stalled with process issues/questions. (Item g)
* Status unknown for FCC programs like Lifeline, eRate, net neutrality with new FCC Chair; possible broadband advisory council (Item h)
* Monica provided an update on AT&T’s Project AirGig. Stevens County not likely, but Monica is keeping us visible to AT&T. (Item i)
* Microsoft Affordable Access Initiative looking at alternative solutions (Item j)
* How and when to engage service providers? (Item k)
* Free thoughts and open discussion
* BAT Fun Fact
* **Next Meeting**: BAT Meetings from this point forward will be the second Thursday of each month. Our next scheduled meeting is April 13th, 2017.

**General updates:**

1. Monica has made arrangements with Aaron Wasserman (Legislative Director for Representative Derek Kilmer who represents the Olympic Peninsula) to hold a conference call March 10th with information about a bipartisan tax incentive plan being prepared that will allow communities to form a Broadband Utility District. Monica Babine, Debra Hansen, Amanda Six, Mayor Knauss, Andrew Engel, Desiree Sweeney, Bryan Lentes, Bert Klimas, Theron DePaulo will be on the call.
2. Mapping -- Trevor: No change since December. No new word from Open Technology Institute (OTI).

Some ISPs are still not on the list (Seymour Channels on the Verizon tower on Colville Mountain and Dash Wireless). Information has been sent to Chris/OTI.

We’d like to start pushing this out to schools, libraries, etc. to get real data but we’re not ready yet.

The issue with some users, though, was that some users could not comment that they could not finish the test (had problems like timing out) and had no way to document that. Trevor commented that those problems may have been that OTI was still working on it at the time. Another issue was satellite connectivity for some (like on the wedge) comes from a server in Canada.

Satellite members need to verify if there are still problems. Approximately 1/3 of library staff is on satellite. Jessica will send out the link to the BAT team and library staff along with the note to document failures.

(Dish Network is also a satellite provider now, too.)

BAT members should retry the speed test and especially make note if they have connection issues, time outs, etc.

1. Mark shared that Scoop Mountain is on track! The agreement between the Spokane Tribe and the Stevens County Commissioners was signed last week. This will allow microwave transmission from Spokane to Scoop Mountain to Welpinit Mountain as well as Stevens County transmissions from Scoop Mountain to Welpinit Mountain to Miller Mountain to cover fire district areas. Equipment is purchased, so they hope to be up there within 30 days to install (snow conditions permitting). Broadband at this point is for public safety by providing service to the West End Community Center for the Spokane Tribe and the Fruitland Bible Camp which is designated as a pre-positioned fire camp.
2. Legislative update – Monica: Federally, 21 bills currently have broadband in the title or are focused on broadband, but they don’t seem to have much traction/attention.

An interesting thing is that there seems to be interest from a larger group of Republicans who are interested in internet privacy.

HR 800 is a rural broadband act that somewhat follows the rural electrification model and it is supported by a limited number of Democrats.

Another bill was introduced as part of national infrastructure development with the idea of a wholly owned government corporation that would help with infrastructure (not just broadband) investments. Infrastructure seems to be a key issue with the new administration. It’s also of bi-partisan Senate and House interest especially with public/private partnerships.

In Washington state we have an investment trust for public infrastructure that was introduced as a bill this year.

1. Commissioner McCart has returned from a trip to Washington, D. C. He commented that President Trump’s infrastructure agenda seems focused on roads and bridges, but the House and Senate members he spoke with are interested in broadening it well beyond roads and bridges.

Senator Cantwell is, as we all know, very engaged in making sure that broadband is considered as critical infrastructure and that it gets rolled out similar to rural electrification. (He noted that many people say that is how it is working but some of us don’t see it happening.)

Our representation in the House also seems to agree that broadband needs to be part of the broadband discussion.

It’s early to be expecting much progress in a new administration. Healthcare will be dealt with first and that should be done by April. After that they plan to move immediately into infrastructure, so perhaps by an Easter timeframe we will hear more. The issue does appear to have bipartisan support. He spoke specifically with Congressman Derek Kilmer from Jefferson County who feels particularly strongly about the need for broadband. (Monica mentioned the conference call for tomorrow with Congressman Kilmer’s office.)

Mark also brought FirstNet into the discussion. That is where first responders can tie into local networks; can we leverage any of that connectivity? There have been discussions for a couple of years but it’s still in the planning stages. Monica has more on this later (Item f).

The WA state legislature has about eight bills that have to do with communications.

* PUDs are taking another run at becoming retail providers but there doesn’t seem to be much traction on that.
* An economic development effort was made to reestablish the Washington Broadband Office but that has not been moving forward.
* The Washington trust investment for public infrastructure (mentioned previously) does not appear to be moving forward.
* One thing that does seem to be moving forward is the port districts’ efforts to be able to provide telecommunications. In February it passed in the Senate and there is a hearing scheduled in the House for March 16th. Stay tuned!
* Another bill (in the Senate and House) is about telecommunications service provisioning revisions about streamlining some of the permitting processes, pole attachments, etc. This and the port districts’ efforts are still in active conversation (legislatively and otherwise) and appear to be moving forward.
* Wes commented on the Port District efforts: Mary Dye put the House bill (HB 1702) forward and the companion bill (SB 5679) in the Senate was by Senator Judy Warnick. The committee that oversees those bills on the House side “crashed and burned”; many bills did not move. The House bill was sent to committee on Feb. 7th. SB 5679 moved from the Senate to the House and is scheduled for public hearing in the House Committee on Technology & Economic Development for March 16th (subject to change).

<http://app.leg.wa.gov/billsummary?BillNumber=1702&Year=2017>

<http://app.leg.wa.gov/billsummary?BillNumber=5679&Year=2017>

There’s no reason we shouldn’t comment on this bill, and we could even start the process of becoming a port district.

1. Mayor Dorothy Knauss: Next Century Cities sent a letter to President Trump, Speaker Ryan, and Senate Majority Leader McConnell asking them to include broadband in the definition of infrastructure. Sixty mayors, including Mayor Knauss, signed the letter. It was read into the record of the Senate hearing on improving access to infrastructure.

<http://nextcenturycities.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/MayorsLetteronBroadbandInfrastructure.docx-1.pdf>

The Association of Washington Cities (AWC) Board of Directors was asked to submit questions to the governor. Mayor Knauss’s question to him was asking how the state could help get broadband into rural areas such as Stevens County. His answer was (paraphrased), “Yes, we want to do that” but didn’t have any specifics.

Mayor Knauss represents all of eastern Washington as the co-chair of the Small Cities Advisory Committee for the AWC. She has been asked to go into a partners for rural development symposium in Olympia April 12th. The attendees will be Mayor Knauss and an AWC colleague, the Department of Commerce, Rural Development Initiative/USDA, AVISTA, Association of Counties, Tribal representatives, Department of Agriculture, Emergency Managers, Housing and Urban Development, WSU Extension (including Monica), Workforce Development, Partners for Rural Washington board, philanthropic organizations, and the governor’s staff. Technology is an agenda item and broadband will figure prominently.

Debra pointed out that every time we get our name out there helps move the dial a little bit more. Debra will send out some documents to the new members that help show what the BAT team has been up to.

1. Bert and Monica: National Digital Inclusion Association and NTIA/Broadband USA’s Community Connectivity Initiative (CCI) have been holding webinars. Bert has been on calls and webinars making sure that Stevens County’s efforts are shared with people as well as advoating for rural communities in general.

The CCI tool is still being co-designed to include the types of things that we want to see in it. At the moment it is still in a holding pattern waiting for the approval from the Office of Management and Budgets (OMB) in order to release the test. In the meantime they have asked other areas of Washington (possibly Lincoln and Adams Counties) to join in. Kickoff date is expected in May with work progressing through the summer; evaluation is expected in the fall with a national rollout after that.

Mark pointed out that Whitman County has a port where they use fiber/dark fiber deployments. He talked with them four or five years ago to see what the Port of Whitman is doing. Amanda added that a single IT person was administering for the City of Colfax, the library district, and the port. It would make an interesting discussion if that person is still in place and available.

FirstNet/OneNet: FirstNet -- at the national level: The intent is to build and maintain a nationwide wireless broadband network for public safety. The bill was signed into law in February 2012. Since then, activity has been focused on outreach and gathering information to figure out who will provide this service. An RFP went out in January of 2016 and responses were in by May. A few larger groups were in the running but a court injunction was filed in November by a group that was interested but had not made the cut. There are hearings underway this month to determine if there were problems with the process. Hopefully the contract will be awarded this spring. AT&T is rumored to be a strong contender. It’s possible that whoever gets the contract will need regional partners. An educated guess is that it will be six months between the time of vendor selection and the availability of a draft state plan. FirstNet is hoping that each state can have the plan approved in a three month period.

[www.firstnet.gov/](http://www.firstnet.gov/)

OneNet -- at the state level: Not much can be done by the state team until things are in place nationally. Mark asked how it would be rolled out – state emergency management? Direct to counties? Monica acknowledged that all this still depends on what the carrier of choice puts together in the plan. There has been some conversation at the state legislative level to get additional funds for the state OneNet office to continue but they are still working with the military department, state interoperability executive committee, etc., to be sure that everybody is in the loop.

Mark pointed out that military and FEMA money might go into it, but it’s strictly a wireless system that will have dedicated frequency/separate bandwidth.

<https://onenet.wa.gov>

Monica also wanted to share that OneNet has just released a documentary called ShotsFired. <http://shotsfired.onenet.wa.gov>

1. The new chair of the FCC has been active in the media. There are questions as to whether or not programs from the previous administration will continue. Lifeline, eRate, net neutrality, etc. The FCC chairman also announced that he’d like to have a broadband advisory council; names have been submitted for that. It’s to be able to get input to the FCC from across the country that could impact how the do business. That’s a definite “Stay Tuned.”
2. AT&Ts Project AirGig is a broadband over powerline service. They are finalizing locations for this fall. One will be in the US. Monica met with AT&T’s government affairs department and they implied that the pilot won’t be taking place in Washington. They do know there is interest in Washington and Monica reminds them that we are “good geography” for a test.
3. Microsoft is doing some work related to broadband. They have an Affordable Access Initiative which is a department within Microsoft that primarily supports projects to fund small businesses around the world to do trials with alternative solutions to achieving broadband in rural areas and a few urban areas, especially for areas around schools.

<https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/affordable-access-initiative/home>

TV “white space” is one example. A part of the spectrum became available when we went from analog TV to digital TV. That “white space” has been freed up. We found out recently that Lincoln County has been selected to work with Microsoft on a TV white space project. (Again, a neighboring county that we can stay close with. They had a BAT-like team during the ARRA funding era. Their county commissioners continue to be active and interested in broadband conversations.)

1. Engaging ISPs

Consensus has been to invite them all. Bert has provided Debra with a draft letter inviting them to the table and Monica will provide some key phrasing she’s used in the past. We don’t expect proprietary information from them, but it can be a get-to-know you meeting. It’s a very facilitated conversation. Monica pointed out that it accomplishes several things.

* We find out who is willing to come and be part of the conversation.
* We find out what they are willing to share.
* It gives us a chance to ask questions.
* It frequently gives providers a chance to meet with each other. The often find they have a chance to work together and partner in different areas.

The TEDD conference room will be a good place to meet. Those who are willing to help design the day can step forward. We’ve got Monica’s experience, a draft letter, and we’ll have a map with data on it soon.

Mayor Knauss had 6 or 7 different providers at a meeting at the golf course. She was told that EcliptixNet had solutions for everyone and CenturyLink had fiber everywhere; in the end she felt she learns more (reliably) from her public works crews. She does know now that Charter is laying fiber and planning to serve all of Chewelah and the golf course. Internet Express has received permission from the FAA for another tower and to lay fiber to service the golf course.

The value of the meeting itself? The community thought at the time that it had value, but they don’t feel yet like they have seen any results.

At the least, a meeting will give providers a chance to meet with us or not; tell us the truth or not.

1. Free thoughts and open discussion:

Wes shared the thought of PUDs as ISPs. The idea is getting traction in Olympia. There’s long been resistance to public entities competing in the market but the legislators are feeling the frustration of the public not seeing any results.

Bert commented about a recent article about Ellensburg (a) having fiber overhead, and (b) Ellensburg is acting as an ISP. Discussion ensued as to who can (library districts, cities, PUDs, etc.) or can’t (counties) become a provider. Port Angeles is an ISP but they only provide fiber to anchor institutions; the private sector took it from there.

<https://ci.ellensburg.wa.us/internet>

Wes commented about overhead fiber: The Stevens County PUD has concerns that everything NoaNet has is in the ground whereas everything they are putting in is on poles. They have to rent the poles and they are on the hook for weather damage since it is exposed.

The commissioners considered a lawsuit over the PUD giving all the infrastructure back to NoaNet. The commissioners asked the PUD to extend the contract with NoaNet for a three year term; talks are ongoing and the extension is likely. The PUD has been invited to work with this group so that we can continue to work on this and getting deployment to the people. The PUD’s concerns are capitalization, trying to get their commissioners informed on how this rolls out, and the long-term commitment to new infrastructure, and long term support of a technology they are not familiar with.

Note: Wes was careful to only share what he felt was appropriate since the discussions were in an executive session.

The PUD is on the BAT email list. The county commissioners have invited them to the BAT team. They are always welcome at the BAT table.

Possible entities who could advise: Port of Whitman?

What other options do we have? Negotiate with NoaNet? Become a port district? Can a private entity like Avista (who owns the poles) be involved? What if Avista puts out a smart grid for their meters? Would that give connectivity to every home? Is there any legislative leverage on a private company (as opposed to a PUD) to transfer ARRA/NoaNet or otherwise incentivize them to participate?

When Monica was working with Lincoln County in 2014 they had an inactive PUD that was wondering about getting into the broadband business. They interviewed PUDs that were involved with broadband in similar areas (Chelan, Douglas, Okanogan, Pend Oreille, Stevens) How did they get into the business? Lessons learned? How did they operate? Monica has a PowerPoint slideshow she will send to Debra. Lincoln County is served by both Avista and Inland Power. Both were asked about their interest and both said, “No. Heck no.”

Mark talked about how Lincoln County’s PUD is inactive. Could their PUD get it, then contract back to the county and have the IT Director run it for them? They needed more staff than someone who already had a full-time job, though. That meant they would need more money to hire someone. So NoaNet runs it in Lincoln County (and also Ferry County). They own it – NoaNet put up the cash match. Lincoln County hosts in their data center for a fee.

Wes cautioned all of us to remember when dealing with districts in Washington. Library districts, fire districts, port districts, etc. all have their own boards, commissioners, and structure to deal with. Would we have one port district for all of Stevens County?

Final random item: Bert noticed that her Grange dues notification allowed her to designate funds toward a cause. She wrote a partial check for dues and a separate check for $1 to go toward rural broadband. Stay tuned.

**Other notes of interest**

BAT Fun Facts for the Month: In 2010, Finland became the first country in the world to make broadband a legal right for every citizen.

In December 2016, Canada's telecom regulator declared that broadband Internet must be considered "a basic telecommunications service for all Canadians" and created a fund to connect rural and remote communities. With this decision, high-speed broadband is now treated as an essential technology similar to voice service.

All Canadians should be able to purchase home Internet with 50Mbps download speeds and 10Mbps uploads, and they should have the option of purchasing unlimited data, the Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) [announcement](http://news.gc.ca/web/article-en.do?nid=1172599) said. A [new fund](http://news.gc.ca/web/article-en.do?nid=1172419) will make $750 million available over the next five years to support projects in areas where that level of broadband isn't available.

Money will be distributed to applicants based upon a competitive process. Funding can be used either for fixed broadband service or to upgrade mobile networks, but the goals of 50Mbps/10Mbps and unlimited data for all is specifically for home Internet service. About 10 percent will be allocated to communities that are dependent on satellite access.

<http://news.gc.ca/web/article-en.do?nid=1172599>

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