

MEDA Broadband Committee Meeting

March 8, 2021

2pm

Present: Geoff Feiss, Tracy McIntyre, (Chair); Anne Boothe, Allison Corbyn, Russ Fletcher, Bethany Chinadle, Steve Simonson, Stephanie Juneau, Mary Roehr, Mehmet Casey, and others who were not visible on the recording.

Bill List Discussion

SB297: Passed and is moving on to Senate Finance and Claims. Passed almost unanimously from House. Some amendments being worked on.

HB422: municipal networks; dead

HB494: dig once; passed to next house

HB51: tax abatement bill; moved to house

State Library study bill.

HB252: workforce training; passed house; priority for Governor Gianforte.

Governor Committee Update

Allison and Anne reported on the Governor's Broadband Roundtable. Everyone was aware of Montana's poor broadband numbers; all were interested in moving forward. There is a big learning curve for those new to broadband issues but progress will be made. Barriers were brought up but the discussion did not get into the weeds. Anne noted Allison did a great job of sharing information from this committee with the new group.

Federal COVID Relief Funds

A brief discussion was held on what may be coming to Montana related to broadband with federal covid relief. Also noted the American Rescue Plan which contains a lot of broadband support. It is appearing that several programs are emerging all aimed at helping broadband connectivity.

Misc.

Apprentice Program for cooperatives in the works.

Next Steps

- Clarify barriers to broadband, including issues with workforce, supply, right of way, etc.
- Meet again March 22, 2021