

MEDA NextGen Broadband Committee

October 12, 2020

2:00pm

Present: Tracy McIntyre, Chair; Steve Simonson, Mehmet Casey, Russ Fletcher, Allison Corbyn, Jerry Meerkatz, Brian Obert and Gloria O'Rourke.

1. Update on the National Broadband Availability Mapping- design next steps

Russ gave an update on NBAM. Jennie Stapp, State Library, is willing to act as the Coordinator for the State of Montana so Montana can join the Broadband Initiative. It also turns out she and others are well on their way to writing legislation to develop a state Broadband Coordinator. The committee will wait until seeing what Jenni is proposing to create its own language. Tracy will also see what MTA has on its legislative agenda and compare notes.

MCDC did receive an EDA COVID grant which provided some funding for mapping broadband. Russ referred Tracy to Ken Wall, Geodata services in Missoula, who is a pro at mapping. Ken Wall, President, Geodata Services, Inc., Kwall@geodataservicesinc.com; www.geodataservicesinc.com (406) 370-6438

2. Update from State Library's on State Broadband Coordinator Discussion/Movement

As mentioned above, Jenni is making progress and will share draft language for legislative proposal(s).

Discussion on 25/3 being too low; we should go for a goal of 5 gig. Microsoft now has a policy that a large number of workforce will telecommute. The opportunity for Montana right now is huge.

3. Update on MT CARES funding

Allison reported the state is saying all funds have been expended. Thus, it is not likely that we can secure funds for broadband. Still, this committee felt it would be wise to have a request in writing in case funding does open up. Should a Broadband position open up, a discussion was held on what department or division it would reside.

4. Discussion: MEDA is developing their Legislative Priorities and Policy.

This committee is asked to discuss and bring forward policy statements, activities of concern, and provide insight on what priorities as related to broadband should MEDA support. This group will share emails to try to have language before the Friday MEDA Legislative Committee.

Suggested thus far: Improve Broadband Access, Reliability and Affordability

- Create a statewide coordinator
- Get Montana on the map
- Go for 5 gig with minimum speeds listed. Note: Providers are not providing what customers are paying.

5. Misc. and Next Call

- a. Mehmet reached out to Wyoming broadband officials as well as SpaceX reps but has not had a response.
- b. Webinar about high speed internet in the heartland – challenges and opportunities, October 16th, 10am, MST.
<https://register.gotowebinar.com/register/6968738091709816592>

- c. The next meeting will be Monday, October 26th, at 2pm.