**Meeting Minutes**

**OKANOGAN COUNTY & CCT**

**BROADBAND ACTION TEAM MEETING**

**August 23, 2021**

**2-3:30 pm**

**Meeting started: 2:05 pm.**

**Introductions: Attendees by Zoom/call in:**

Roni Holder-Diefenbach (Executor Director Economic Alliance), Kayla Wells (WSU OK CO Ext.), Brandi Schwerdtferger (ACRS, CAD Manager), Mike Worden (OK CO), Trevor Lane (WSU Extension), Kellie Conn (WSU OK CO Ext.), Scott Graham (CEO 3-Rivers Hospital), James Lightfoot (ACRS), Mike Worden (OKCO), David Grooms (USEI), Misty Ruiz (City of Brewster), Ernest Rasmussen (COM), John McDonald (PUD), Rachel McClure, (N. District Rep for Newhouse), Jory Wolf (WA State Broadband Office).

Meeting Minutes were approved for last month’s meeting.

Presentation: Trevor Lane- Precision AG. Trevor assists small farms and ranches, specializing in agritourism. Precision Ag is enhancing a current skill set to another level, learning programs such as Microsoft word more intelligently. Precision agriculture technologies include equipment guidance and automatic steering, yield monitoring, remote sensing, etc. Using computers for irrigation, GPS, robotics, weather modeling and drones to create efficiency in farming and new opportunities.

* James Lightfoot (ACRS), how do we get this information out to the farmers and who will teach them?
  + Trevor-We do this by meeting with farmers, getting to know them and their operations, it is a work in progress.
* Ernest Rasmussen (COM), the mayor of Okanogan and I had a conversation about the relevance of precision AG and an adoption strategy to monitor water consumption.
* John McDonald (PUD), you are looking at futures and what it could be, we are seeing some of this occurring right now with the number of grow operations for the cannabis industry. Broadband growth serves their needs. In the spectrum of precision AG what is the need for broadband services?
  + Trevor- We need to start somewhere, starting small with a wireless connection, being able to manage drones to take pictures is great, but what we really want is fiber to the farm.
  + Ernest- There is an affordability issue for Farmers using broadband. We need to continue offering the speed test, get that message out and look at the results down the line. We need the data to compete for NTIA grants. Here is the link.
  + [https://www.arcgis.com/apps/opsdashboard/index.html#/4bcf7c77ecac475eb467e9df0028d05b](https://www.arcgis.com/apps/opsdashboard/index.html%23/4bcf7c77ecac475eb467e9df0028d05b)

**New Business:** Roni Holder-Diefenbach (Executive Director Economic Alliance)

Methow Valley Update. Don is retiring and the rest of the group is not sure what they want. They will stay on our radar.

NTIA application, the deadline was the 17th. The PUD proposal, the state only selected 5 counties and our county PUD were not selected. Not a loss and we submitted with another partner to apply for 11 M will include the Pine Creek Area. Will continue to go after funding.

Misty Ruiz, the city of Brewster has been working on their own Broadband plan, we just ranked them rather highly. As well as the PUD’s Pine Creek project which was ranked 3 out of 24 projects and the Brewster project was ranked number 4. To have two broadband projects in the top five for Okanogan County is huge.

* Misty have you been working with Zipley on this project?
  + Yes, we have spoken with Zipley a couple times, and we are still a bit worried that the citizens may not be what the residents are hoping for, we would like to have multiple vendors in Brewster.
  + John-The challenge that I see there is if Zipley is successful in getting grant funding, they will successfully block everybody else from getting federal or even state dollars to create a competitive environment in the Brewster market, the money goes solely to a private organization, not a public one.
  + Misty- There must be a way that we can have multiple vendors, at my house I have multiple options and it would be nice if our citizens have the same.
  + John-We would like to meet with Zipley and see if we can turn an open access model, rather than a private corporate model. More to follow.
  + Roni Holder-Diefenbach (Executor Director Economic Alliance) When you have the meeting It would be great to invite them to the Broadband Action Team meetings.
  + Ernest- Yes, it would be good to extend the invitation to the state Broadband office to join the conversation so we can address these types of challenges.
* Jory Wolf is there anything new from the state?
  + No, other than the state is continuing to work with ‘learn, design, apply’ per our conversation with Russ Elliot. There are a number of applications which are going forward. There is work being done with the Colville Tribes, NTIA grant applications which will be submitted before the end of this week. Also continuing to follow what is happening in Ferry County.
* Anything from you James?
  + We are working with Silas from tri-county on the next feasibility study, hoping to conclude the report that will put them in a position to apply for funding. Reconnect should be announced sometime in September, we are keeping our eye on that opportunity.

The Economic Alliance is moving offices to Okanogan. We are still working with James at ACRS on the expansion of our USDA grant, we have a contract through May of next year. Moving forward with our efforts to get fiber to the premises.

If anyone has ideas of who could join our meetings to present that would be great, maybe start bringing in RSP’s. I spoke with Bill Swayze of Community Net, being he is not on the list at the federal site he has lost 3 or 4 customers because they have transitioned to comcast.

Ernest Rasmussen- Wanted to share some of the EBB enrollment numbers for Okanogan County as of last week. It’s at 25% enrollment statewide, Chelan, Douglas and Okanogan County are at 21%. Spokane County section at 32%. So, more work to do. These are total households that qualify.

Roni- Thank you and we will see everyone again next month. The meeting is on September 27th at 2:00 PM.

Meeting adjourned at 3:00 PM.