

FLATHEAD COUNTY BROADBAND WORKSHOP

DISCUSSION WORKSHEET

6-13-18

GROUP NAME: BIGFORK

1. WHAT ARE THE BROADBAND ISSUES IN YOUR AREA?

- Availability
- Reliability
- Ducted network throughout Bigfork proper.
- 1st solutions for surrounding area = integrating to solve at same time.
- Key players (developers; BF sewer/water, banks, BLUAC
- Communications to/from providers (loss of services)
- Viable solutions to the "common man"
- Solutions for Bigfork and surrounding areas
- Affordable
- Easier connections to the network/infrastructure
- True options for providers (not just marketing)

2. LIST EXISTING BROADBAND INITIATIVES – SUCCESS STORIES – RESOURCES THAT YOU ARE AWARE OF IN FLATHEAD COUNTY.

3. ARE YOU INTERESTED IN PARTICIPATING IN A TASK FORCE/WORK GROUP TO ADDRESS BROADBAND ISSUES IN YOUR COMMUNITY?

Community already has a work group meeting on this issue.

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GROUP NAME: COLUMBIA FALLS

1. WHAT ARE THE BROADBAND ISSUES IN YOUR AREA?

- Dept. of Transportation regulations for right-of-way are first-come, first-served. Creates issues and increases costs for water and sewer upgrades.
- Federal regulations limit use of dark fiber (i.e. HIEM, e-rate)
- No local policy for installation of conduit (i.e. Dig Once)
- There should be standard right-of-way policies for state and local
- Difficulties with railroad right-of-way
- Request FCC exemptions for use of dark fiber for public use

2. LIST EXISTING BROADBAND INITIATIVES – SUCCESS STORIES – RESOURCES THAT YOU ARE AWARE OF IN FLATHEAD COUNTY.

- Work on a community plan for broadband.
- Investigate funding for plan from EDA, FCEDA, Big Sky Trust Fund
- Look for opportunities for County and City to work together on issues
- Possibility of tax levy for technology investments
- TIF Funding for broadband

3. ARE YOU INTERESTED IN PARTICIPATING IN A TASK FORCE/WORK GROUP TO ADDRESS BROADBAND ISSUES IN YOUR COMMUNITY?

Yes

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GROUP NAME: KALISPELL

1. WHAT ARE THE BROADBAND ISSUES IN YOUR AREA?

- Attracting employees. Health care has difficulty attracting employees. They want Internet at home.
- Realtors – Discontinued sales when Internet not available. New homes refused service because it is not available. (Is more of an issue for residential areas.)
- Residential access
- Inconsistent pricing – need transparency
- Dishonest answers about availability. Dishonest answer from provider about whether there is service. Say yes, then there is not upon sale. No other options with other providers.
- Economic Fraud. Lack of regulation.
- Digital Divide. Economic disparity between consumers. Businesses have more access.
- Expensive infrastructure
- Services rely on Internet (health care, education ...)
- Must contact frequently
- Is it a private business or a public utility? Is it about \$ or is it about providing a public utility?
- Pricing transparency. Cost/price is inconsistent. Must contact frequently for info.
- Reliability of service/redundancy. Especially in residential areas.
- Digital divide.
- Community health. Can't access records. If there are no smart phone must rely on Internet.
- Service providers are not local and not knowledgeable
- Lack of meaningful competition for price and quality.
- Should be considered a utility.
- Cumbersome process to transfer ownership to new home owners.
- Planning Boards need to approve as part of development.

2. LIST EXISTING BROADBAND INITIATIVES – SUCCESS STORIES – RESOURCES THAT YOU ARE AWARE OF IN FLATHEAD COUNTY.

- Flathead Electric Cooperative has new fiber. They went to 500 mbps and monthly bill went down.
- Can get Internet access at the library when can not get access at home
- HIEM
- Resources are abundant in the valley. A lot of options.
- Providers work together
- F.C./PDX – public utilities
- Democratization of access
- Libraries – digital literacy access
- Fort Collins, CO/Portland, OR are successful examples. Internet part of public utilities.

3. ARE YOU INTERESTED IN PARTICIPATING IN A TASK FORCE/WORK GROUP TO ADDRESS BROADBAND ISSUES IN YOUR COMMUNITY?

Potential Task Force members:

- Library
- NMAR
- Mike Parrish
- Jim Cossitt
- Michelle Kay
- Laird Reed
- Diane Taylor - Mahane

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GROUP NAME: WHITEFISH

1. WHAT ARE THE BROADBAND ISSUES IN YOUR AREA?

- Internet is down a lot. Is this the ISP or a user issue?
- Lack of fiber (capacity) insufficient vision
- Businesses have choice. Residential does not.
- Not a priority for City Council. Missed opportunities to install fiber/conduit when streets are under construction.
- Lack of fiber redundancy
- Lack of reliability (consistently available)
- Need more capacity/vision for telecommuters

2. LIST EXISTING BROADBAND INITIATIVES – SUCCESS STORIES – RESOURCES THAT YOU ARE AWARE OF IN FLATHEAD COUNTY.

- Many providers are coming in
- Efforts are underway to integrate IT infrastructure standards into public works standards
- Local sales tax is a great tool
- Bigfork Economic Development actions on Broadband

3. ARE YOU INTERESTED IN PARTICIPATING IN A TASK FORCE/WORK GROUP TO ADDRESS BROADBAND ISSUES IN YOUR COMMUNITY?

Marion and Matt are willing to be on local work group
Survey community to show council value of broadband

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GROUP NAME: BROADBAND PROVIDERS

1. WHAT ARE THE BROADBAND ISSUES IN YOUR AREA?

This area made up the majority of our discussion

- Acts of God (Trees, Floods....) – Significant outage the previous Sunday-Monday caused by tree falling on Access Montana fiber line near Woods Bay. Impacted much of Flathead County. 911 Center was down. Charter services, such as State network, were down. Type of service that went down was unpredictable. Some mission critical services failed while other non-critical services remained online.
- Lack of Redundancy – Outage noted above could have been avoided if there were multiple paths out of the county. Century Link has fiber on west side of Flathead Lake but that was not used as a redundant path.
- Regulatory Reform: County and municipalities need to clarify/simplify permit processes for providers and developers. Cost of permitting was also noted as a barrier to greater deployment.
- Lack of strategic plan: There should be a 20-year broadband infrastructure plan developed by local government, providers, and anchor institutions. Similar to existing water, sewer, transportation and growth plans
- Suggestion: Tax benefit for developers who build publicly available broadband infrastructure that conforms to plan.
- Better communication between stakeholders is key to better projects
- Understanding the specific broadband challenges any individual community faces is critical to identifying and implementing appropriate solutions

2. LIST EXISTING BROADBAND INITIATIVES – SUCCESS STORIES – RESOURCES THAT YOU ARE AWARE OF IN FLATHEAD COUNTY.

- No Flathead County projects noted.
- Dave Martin (Blackfoot CTO) discussed the ways he believed the Bozeman projects could be used as a model, including:
 - City-built conduit system available for lease by providers
 - Non-profit owned open access fiber network

3. ARE YOU INTERESTED IN PARTICIPATING IN A TASK FORCE/WORK GROUP TO ADDRESS BROADBAND ISSUES IN YOUR COMMUNITY?

- Not discussed in the Provider group