



## **March 6, 2020 Leadership Team Meeting Teleconference Report**

### **Attendees**

Steve Peters, Oris Friesen, Henry Goldberg, Mark Goldstein, Robert Jacobson, Janet Major, Derek Masseth,

### **Welcome New Member of AZBSN Leadership Team**

Steve welcomed Robert (Bob) Jacobson to the Arizona Broadband Stakeholder Network (AZBSN) leadership team. Bob is Chairman of Atelier Tomorrow Inc., a non-profit organization that has recently worked on projects with Pima County and the Arizona Technology Council. Bob has had extensive experience working in telecommunications, including as a consultant to the California legislature on e-commerce and universal service, as well as owning virtual reality companies. He has connected with Jeff Sobotka at the Arizona Commerce Authority, who recommended he become involved with the AZBSN.

### **AZBSN Newsletter and Flyer**

Steve intends to put out another AZBSN newsletter in the near future. He invited the AZBSN Leadership Team to submit brief articles for this (e.g. an article on telemedicine in Arizona or on the E-rate activities in the state).

Steve has created a one-page flyer overviewing the AZBSN. Mark Goldstein mentioned that he and Henry Goldberg are including this flyer in e-mails to invite new potential members to join the ATIC Board.

### **Letter Requesting Support for Governor's Broadband Priorities**

Mark Goldstein stated he just received an e-mail from Ben Blink, Governor Ducey's Policy Advisor on Transportation and Technology Innovation, requesting assistance in getting the Governor's broadband budget proposals approved by the legislature. The Governor has proposed two broadband items in this year's budget: 1) \$10 million for the Rural Broadband Development Grant Program; and 2) \$50 million for a "Smart Highways Corridor" initiative that would install conduit and fiber along more than 500 miles of Arizona interstate highways (for wrong-way detection cameras, road sensors, dynamic message signs, and other traffic safety technology, as well as excess conduit for high-speed Internet connectivity).

Ben Blink requests that constituencies who care about rural broadband reach out to legislators on the House & Senate Appropriations Committee and Transportation Committee. Blink will be delivering a presentation on the Governor's broadband initiatives to the House Committee on Technology on March 11<sup>th</sup> at 9:00 am. Mark Goldstein noted people can register online for this meeting and submit comments (Steve will send an e-mail on how to submit comments), but the meeting room is small so some registrants may not be able to attend. Ben Blink says any

support (meeting or e-mailing or calling legislators, social media, op-eds) would be appreciated, and he would like to be informed about such actions.

## **Arizona Activities Related to Rural Broadband**

Steve noted the Arizona School Board Association held their Rural Alliance and Rural Advocacy Day on February 17<sup>th</sup>. Steve and Derek Masseth attended this event, but it did not discuss broadband except to clear up a misconception about Arizona Corporation Commission funding for it. Steve wants to build a relationship with this organization to examine broadband for rural schools.

The Helios Education Foundation is creating an “Arizona Student Opportunity Collaborative” in partnership with the Arizona Department of Education, Arizona State University, and seven rural school districts. It is focused on establishing a network to offer courses that rural students need to graduate but where the schools do not have the necessary teaching resources for these courses. Steve arranged a conference call for the Collaborative Leadership with Steve, Jeff Sobotka and Derek Masseth to discuss how AZBSN, the ACA and the Sun Corridor Network might be able to help.

Local First Arizona is holding a Rural Policy Forum on August 5 -7, 2020. Steve would like broadband to be on the agenda for this forum.

Steve summarized saying AZBSN wants to tie into relevant rural Arizona activities where broadband issues could be addressed.

## **AZBSN 2020 Plans: Forum with Commissioner Peterson, Webinar**

Steve has been working on plans previously proposed for the AZBSN in 2020, and has had to make modifications. One problem is the Rio Salado College conference room for a May roundtable was only available on May 25<sup>th</sup>, and so he is intending to substitute the May roundtable proposed previously with an in-person forum as discussed below.

Steve proposes an in-person forum with Arizona Corporation Commission Commissioner Lea Marquez Peterson regarding the National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners (NARUC) Broadband Task Force. This forum would tentatively be held on April 20<sup>th</sup> from 1:00 – 3:00 pm, at a location to be determined. The issues to be discussed at this forum are described below.

### **Forum with ACC Commissioner Marquez Peterson**

Arizona Corporation Commissioner Lea Marquez Peterson has been appointed to a NARUC Presidential Broadband Expansion Task Force. The Task Force will study mechanisms to roll out broadband services to unserved areas. The Task Force may set NARUC policy on these issues via resolutions (on e.g., mapping, coordination of federal and/or federal and state subsidy programs, pending legislation).

Issues that the Task Force, and Commissioner Marquez Peterson, will be addressing include:

- How some States have successfully shifted state universal service funds from telephone and op ex support to broadband buildout capital support and any lessons learned that other states could utilize.
- What other state programs are successfully building out broadband, how are they funded, and how are they structured.

- How NARUC and NARUC members can best work with the FCC to help craft Universal Service Fund programs that will be most successful at expanding broadband into unserved areas.
- Electric and gas utilities who have successfully leveraged their infrastructure to provide broadband service, including lessons learned from considering any regulatory hurdles, project funding mechanisms, the relative financial success for the utility, how (or should) State commissions incentivize such projects, and whether the overall approach can be replicated elsewhere.
- Information related to the impacts of rural broadband deployment on economic development, education, healthcare, quality of life, the delivery of public utilities services and its ultimate benefits to customers.

NARUC felt a separate task force is needed because the overlap in strategies impacts the NARUC Electricity, Consumer Affairs, and Telecommunications Committees.

### **Broadband redundancy and diversity for our state's 911 public safety answering points (PSAPs)**

Commissioner Peterson would also like to address the issue of broadband redundancy and diversity for our state's 911 public safety answering points (PSAPs). After a motorist death in Payson in 2017, a 911 service outage in Pima County in 2019, and a 911 service outage in Page in 2020, the Arizona Corporation Commission has become concerned that our PSAPs may not have the sufficient broadband redundancy and diversity necessary to provide continuous and reliable 911 service in the event a broadband carrier's service goes down. The Commission has also become concerned with respect to CenturyLink's role in the recent instances and has asked staff to prepare an order to show cause to determine whether CenturyLink is doing enough to provide continuous and reliable service to PSAPs throughout Arizona. While the Commission's staff works to prepare the order, Commissioner Marquez Peterson has also suggested that stakeholders form a "CenturyLink Working Group" or "911 Redundancy Working Group" to look at more immediate and pragmatic solutions for Arizona's 911 PSAPs and investigate whether PSAPs can also serve as "anchor institutions" for purposes of furthering other broadband initiatives and programs.

Bob Jacobson commented that a lot of the issues above are being dealt with in California by the California Public Utilities Commission, and that they have not received much help from the FCC. Steve stated Jeff Sobotka will be present at this forum with Commissioner Peterson, and provide information to her about what has been happening on broadband in rural Arizona.

### **AZBSN Upcoming Webinar and Roundtable**

Steve is working on organizing the next AZBSN webinar, which he hopes to hold in late March. The original March 26<sup>th</sup> date is not working out because of scheduling conflicts of some AZBSN Leadership Team members. The webinar would be 1.5 hours in length. The speakers would likely include: Jeff Sobotka (giving a brief overview of his State of Arizona broadband director activities), and two or three other presenters chosen from the following possibilities – Janet Major (Arizona Telemedicine Program), Mala Muralidharan (State E-rate Program), Derek Masseth (Sun Corridor Network), Dominic Papa (Smart State Initiatives at ACA), and Melissa Armas (Arizona Blockchain Initiative).

Steve stated he now plans to hold the in-person roundtable (after the April forum with Commissioner Peterson) in September 2020. He would like to have some policy discussions at the roundtable, as opposed to the webinars which are oriented to informational presentations. He says we may want to call key stakeholders to attend this roundtable since they may not read the e-mail announcements.

Steve is being careful to coordinate the webinars and roundtables with Jeff Sobotka, who is also coordinating with the Governor's Office. Steve added Jeff Sobotka is pleased with the significant role AZBSN is taking in communicating with broadband stakeholders around the state.

Mark Goldstein commented that we should also keep Ben Blink (representing the Governor's Office) on our radar, and Steve replied he wants to be careful to not interfere with Jeff Sobotka's work with Ben Blink. Mark added that he is in regular communication with Ben Blink, and the AZBSN newsletters will be helpful in informing people he is in touch with. Steve stated that the AZBSN website also can keep stakeholders informed.

Janet Major suggested having a brief overview of issues in webinars, and having deeper discussions at in-person meetings such as roundtables. Janet added there should be a concerted effort to also enable a good experience for remote attendees at roundtables.

## **Seeking AZBSN Sponsors and Other Comments**

Steve is finalizing the AZBSN Sponsorship Request Document today and will be seeking sponsors now. Some initial potential sponsors he will contact are the state universities and the Helios Education Foundation.

Bob Jacobson commented he would like to see the AZBSN help enable broadband deployment in communities like his where high-speed Internet is lacking, and said it is important to work with local leaders to do this. Steve responded that Jeff Sobotka has a high priority in establishing community action teams to seek broadband funding, and there may be a need to have more people work with communities to apply for funding programs and generally assist Jeff and Mala Muralidharan in working with stakeholders.

Mark Goldstein commented that the Governor's broadband funding proposal for 500 miles of fiber on interstate highways might be considered to be opened up for other purposes beyond smart highways such as for educational purposes (Sun Corridor Network, E-rate).

Mark Goldstein stated that ATIC and AZBSN have good relationships with the Arizona Corporation Commission (ACC). Bob Burns, ACC Chair, was responsible for the funding that made Arizona a leader in telemedicine while he was a State Senator and is supportive of rural broadband. Andy Tobin, formerly an ACC Commissioner and now Director of the Arizona Department of Administration, led the ACC state matching funds initiative for the E-rate Modernization broadband infrastructure program. Steve responded that it will be important to determine how the ACC fits into the state's broadband strategic planning going forward and this should be discussed with Jeff Sobotka and Ben Blink.

## **Next Steps**

Henry Goldberg and Oris Friesen will write up a summary report of today's leadership team meeting.