Utah Broadband Advisory Council

Thursday, April 19, 2012
10:00 a.m-12:00 p.m.
Governor's Office of Economic Development

Attendees:

Tara Thue, Governor's Office of Economic Development
Kelleigh Cole, Governor's Office of Economic Development
Spencer Eccles, Governor's Office of Economic Development
Winston Wilkinson, Governor's Office of Economic Development
Spencer Jenkins, Automated Geographic Reference Center
Jessie Pechmann, Automated Geographic Reference Center
Christy Heaton, Automated Geographic Reference Center
Gary Ricks, Utah Department of Technology Services
Juliette Tennert, Governor's Office of Planning and Budget (online)
Donna Jones Morris, Utah State Library
Stan Stoll, Utah Rural Telecom Association
Jim Stewart, Utah Education Network
Jeff Egly, Utah Education Network
Dennis Sampson, Utah Education Network
James Hodges, Utah Education Network

Deb LaMarche, Utah Telehealth Network
Justin Stewart, Utah League of Cities and Towns
Sharon Bertelsen, Ballard Spahr
Steve Proctor, Utah Communications Agency Networks
Bill Harry, Valley Emergency Communications Center (online)
Eric Isom, CenturyLink
Jack Walkenhorst, All West Communications
Dave Ryan, Strata Networks
Steve Corbato, University of Utah
Brock Johansen, Emery Telcom
Jared Anderson, Emery Telcom
Roger Timmerman, UTOPIA
Joseph Wavra, Enterprise Technologies/Goshute
Charles Baldwin, Enterprise Technologies/Goshute (online)
Dennis Likes, SAIC

Summary:

Spencer Eccles, Executive Director of the Governor's Office of Economic Development (GOED) welcomed the Advisory Council to GOED's new office, which is collocated with the Utah Science Technology and Research initiative (USTAR), the Office of Energy Development (OED) and the World Trade Center Utah (WTC Utah). The office is equipped with Utah Education Network's (UEN) Interactive Video Conferencing (IVC) system which enables two-way audio and video conferencing and will be used to facilitate meetings with partners statewide.

Steve Proctor, the Executive Director of the Utah Communications Agency Network (UCAN), was recently appointed to the Federal Communications Commission's (FCC) Interoperability Board. On February 28, 2012, the Middle Class Tax Relief Act of 2012 was passed, which will establish the First Responder Network Authority (First NET) and allocates spectrum for the creation of a nationwide public safety network. The Interoperability Board will establish technical standards for the network and these recommendations are due to the FCC on May 22, 2012. The network will be deployed in phases with substantial rural coverage and will have a cost recovery model where users pay a service fee and receive a user device. First NET will be required to consult with regional, state, tribal, and local jurisdictions with all aspects of construction including tower placement, coverage areas, and security. Each state will appoint a board or officer to coordinate with First Net and the Governor of each state will have the opportunity to opt in to the national network or build their own state network, conforming to national standards. The legislation also established a grant program to assist local areas in the development of infrastructure. It is anticipated the network will incorporate both new and existing infrastructure. Based on the current schedule, the network may begin to roll out as early as 2013. Members of the Advisory Council may be asked to provide input as the state decides whether or not to opt into the network.

Jeff Egly, Associate Director of UEN, recently presented at the Utah League of Cities and Towns Midyear Conference. Several cities and towns have expressed interest in leveraging broadband technologies, such as video conferencing, to participate in meetings on a state level without incurring travel expenses. Establishing high-capacity connections to city and county buildings will be an important step in meeting this need. Some rural towns, such as Cornish, Utah, are not equipped to handle the bandwidth required for these technologies and have had to rely on smartphones to hold remote meetings. Council members recommended providing these cities with the locations of UEN facilities, such as schools, that would allow them to use the IVC system to hold remote meetings, while they work to resolve bandwidth issues.

Tara Thue, Manager of the Utah Broadband Project, presented data to the Council on cities, towns, and businesses who do not have websites. The Project has been working with the Business Expansion and Retention (BEAR) program, who recently surveyed 5000 small- to medium-sized businesses in Utah's 20 rural counties to find out how many of them have websites. Despite Utah's 80% home broadband adoption rate, the survey found that only 28% of the businesses surveyed reported having a website. The Utah Broadband Project also reported that 32% of Utah's cities and towns do not have websites. The Project is working on a strategy to engage partners in assisting cities, towns, and small businesses, particularly in rural areas, to obtain a basic website and educate them on the importance of using technology more effectively. The Utah State Library held a website training for libraries and may have some training materials that may be used in this effort.

Kelleigh Cole, the Utah Broadband Project Coordinator, presented the first draft of the Inaugural Utah Broadband Advisory Council Report to the Council. The report was compiled based on the presentations and discussions of the Advisory Council meetings from June 2011 through May 2012. It organizes information from the presentations and discussions of the Advisory Council into subject areas or broadband issues for specific areas of focus, which include education, libraries, economic development, public safety, healthcare, transportation, and rural broadband access. Each subject area includes a summary of the issue and relevant background information, along with a list of recommendations from the Council for specific parties, including the Governor and the Utah State Legislature, to consider. Council members were asked to review the report and submit any comments or revisions by May 11, 2012. Council members may also be added to the list of contributors by reviewing the document and requesting to be added to the list.

The Utah Broadband Project is also working with the Utah State Library to develop a strategy to increase broadband access for mobile libraries. Mobile libraries are becoming an important community resource to access the Internet. Most mobile libraries are equipped with two laptops for patrons to use, but some stops lack the wireless broadband capability required to access the Internet. The Broadband Project presented data gathered from mobile libraries detailing wireless broadband access. Overall, 80% of mobile library stops have access to some form of wireless broadband access, 5% have intermittent access and 15% reported no access at all. Council members recommended that the libraries work with local providers and other community anchor institutions to determine if WiFi hotspots at schools, city parks, etc. could be used to connect in areas where mobile broadband coverage is unavailable.