



MT. HOOD CABLE REGULATORY COMMISSION
Remote Meeting via phone or computer – Portland OR
September 21, 2020 Meeting Minutes -- APPROVED

SUMMARY MINUTES

Call to Order: 6:30 pm

- Roll Call

Commissioners present: Commissioner Roche, Commissioner Dennerline, Commissioner Thomas, Commissioner McIntire, Commissioner Harden, Chair Studenmund.

Commissioners absent: Commissioner Murphy.

Staff: Elisabeth Perez, Rebecca Gibbons, Rana DeBey, Bea Coulter, Cinthia Diaz Calvo.

- Agenda Review: Perez noted there was a slight change in the agenda item R2 to appropriately convey the content of what will be discussed. She also pointed out that in email communications, R2 summary cover sheet was missing from the document.

Diaz Calvo noted missing summary cover sheet and will ensure public posts include corrected naming convention and cover sheet for R2.

- Disclosures: Harden attended Oregon Mayor's Association Conference, encouraged them to continue Internet Essentials for free throughout the remote learning phase. He asked Comcast to increase the speed and noted internet not being fast enough. He was assured by Comcast that internet work well for up to 4 devices, but Harden has heard that is not the case for families with children.
- Public Comment: None.
- CONSENT AGENDA

*C1. June 15, 2020 Meeting Minutes

MOTION: Harden moved to approve the Consent Agenda as presented. Dennerline seconded.

VOTE: 6-0

REGULAR AGENDA

R1. Community Technology Needs Study Presentation

Perez introduced CBG and Esper House to discuss the study which started April of 2019. The last study was conducted in 2009 through 2010. She expressed appreciation to CBG, Esper House and OCT staff for the countless hours of hard work.

Tom Robinson, with CBG Communications introduced his colleagues Krystene Rivers and Toni Tabora-Roberts, from Esper House, who have collaborated in the completion of the study. Robinson said Tabora-Roberts will focus on Esper House's community engagement study with underserved communities.

Robinson explained the study was extensive and it focused on community technology. It covered a variety of sectors, stakeholders' cable-related constituencies and demographic populations within the entire MHCRC area. There are three specific demographics considered underserved communities which includes, communities of color, people living with disabilities and seniors. The sectors included educations, business, non-profit, health care and local government. Stakeholders included I-net users, grantees, jurisdictions, community media producers and cable subscribers.

Robinson explained the study methodology and listed the 6 key community technology-related questions established by the MHCRC. With the help of OCT staff, 66 lead research questions were developed to inform the key questions. Another primary focus was on more deeply understanding the barriers for known disparities in technology access and adoption for people of color, people living with disabilities, and seniors.

Rivers elaborated on the definition of "disabilities" by saying that it includes multiple types of conditions as defined by the US Census and the City of Portland. It was also communicated widely that the definition would be the same. Using the same definition would allow the team to compare results from the ascertainment survey to the census as it pertains to the same section.

Robinson explained the last section of the community media center focused on the impact of Covid-19. The survey received over 200 responses. Overall, there is community support for what the community media center's work is doing.

Rivers said the first survey that they launched was the Scientific residential telephone survey. This first survey included 630 MHCRC area residents including cable subscribers and nonsubscribers. CBG communications made sure there was a fair representation of the county as a whole. As for the qualitative public online survey, CBG took form the scientific survey but supplemented the survey with additional questions and concerns related to home internet, and the access and use of and cable related questions that had not been asked in the scientific survey to augment their results. The qualitative public online survey included 442 diverse community correspondents who provided a wide and diverse amount of data. The last one was an online community media producer/user survey and this one was created in collaboration with the community media centers. The community media centers promoted this survey. It was completed by both users and producers. For this online community media producer/user survey, there was representation from community that used both community centers.

Robinson said another aspect of their data collection activities was workshops, focus groups, and interviews. These include public agencies from all MHCRC member jurisdictions, Multnomah County Library, Community Media Centers and Community Access Channel Providers, Digital Inclusion Network (DIN), Public School Districts, OHSU Telehealth, Smart City PDX Equity Advisor.

Tabora-Roberts shared Esper House's approach which included a culturally responsive engagements building on relationships, based on interest and capacity of partner groups who are working directly with target populations. More than 20 community leaders were engaged. The target population were racially and ethnically diverse communities, people with disabilities, and seniors. Partner organizations were encouraged to engage with their communities via email.

Highlights for question 1: What is the level of communications technology and services in our communities today?

Robinson reported that 82% wireline internet access at home (primarily broadband), which has increased 10% since 2010. He also said that 18% of households do not have wireline internet access, but the underlining barrier was cost. No need or no desire was also indicated as a primary inhibitor.

Rivers explained that residents are increasingly accessing the internet in places outside the home and increasingly use their own portable devices to do so. Throughout the survey results CBG saw big changes over the 10-year period. More people now are using their work/employer's internet as well as government offices free Wi-Fi, and friends and family's home internet. Restaurants and coffee shops are also being used more today than 10 years ago.

Robinson explained that cable companies have made some strides in the last ten years developing better and more responsive customer service, but still are not well regarded in this area. He pointed out that nationally, the ACSI (American Customer Satisfaction Index) average rating for the cable industry is 64. This reflects recent improvement but is still well below other service industries (the top ACSI score is 100). Robinson said that Open Signal facility users give the Community Media facility staff the highest score of excellent and good ratings (73% combined, including 58% excellent). This is followed by the Community Media facility location at 71% excellent and good (including 48% excellent). The highest fair and poor marks went to hours of operation at 21% combined (including 16% fair). As for MetroEast, Robinson said that their users also give the highest excellent and good ratings to Community Media facility staff at 72% combined (including 63% excellent). This is followed by training/media/digital literacy education at 71% excellent and good (including 57% excellent), which was higher than Open Signals. No fair or poor marks for any characteristic tested exceeded 9% combined.

Highlights for question 2: What barriers are creating inequities for underserved communities?

Rivers explained that across the board, no matter what anybody was paying the responses were that a reasonable cost for them was less than what they were currently paying. She said that an affordable monthly cost for home internet service is "free" for 19% of respondents. People of color and seniors (67% of seniors over 75 years old) were more likely to indicate free. Underserved communities indicate an average cost between \$51 and \$100 per month for home internet. They indicate that \$41-\$50 is a reasonable amount to pay. People who delay or avoid paying other important bills or purchases report paying \$50 or more per month for home internet. They believe \$15 to \$30 is a reasonable amount to pay.

Robinson said that something that might create an even greater divide is the growing use of artificial intelligence. The issue will be the cost of new devices and cost customizing the service for the homes and upgrading or customizing the devices.

Tabora-Roberts wanted to add that besides the cost, a primary factor in non-adoption of communications technologies is a lack of understanding and training regarding the uses of such technology. There is an issue with quality in some areas.

Rivers said that another issue besides cost is that persons living with disabilities are aware of assistive technologies and use them but have multiple issues with using them successfully. The number one frustration was with high prices and cost. They have to spend more money to get an upgraded device. Other frustrations included keeping up with changing technologies, and lack of inclusion of assistive technologies, devices, or apps. Nearly every frustration listed on the Qualitative Public Survey was noted

by one in five or more respondents living with disabilities. Tabora-Roberts added that in the education system, instructors are able to accommodate students with assistive technology but are unable to provide support to teach them with the assistive technology.

Highlights for question 3: What are our communities' communication technology future needs and interests (two-ten years)?

Robinson said their biggest finding was that cost must be removed as a barrier for residents to have access to and effectively use the communications technologies they need. By far, cost was the biggest barrier at 76%. He said that other foreseen barriers are video, geospatial technologies, and artificial intelligence (A.I.), since they are critical technologies that local governments will need to support to provide transparency, sharing information, and effective service provision. He said that to achieve digital equity, the most important characteristics of communications technology going forward are Universal Design (UD) and affordability. The issue is going to be the cost of the devices to accommodate each household needs. UD principles include: Equitable use, flexibility in use, simple and intuitive, perceptible information, tolerance for error, low physical effort, size and space for approach and use.

Tabora-Roberts added that especially from communities of color, they heard that folks are starting business using their cellphone as the point of contact but then they are challenged to use these technologies at a professional level. There is an education gap. i.e. building a website can't be done using a cellphone. There is a gap between education and accessibility.

Robinson continued by saying that there was a higher level of participation and engagement with new communication technologies but not by all residents. He said that digital literacy and the ability to adapt to those skills and new technologies is a primarily employment skill most relevant for future prosperity and opportunity in the digital age economy. They don't think that all residents will be engaged in the new technology. Moreover, he explained that emerging and new technologies will need to use the public rights-of-way and assets to perform effectively.

Highlights for question 4: What is the role of local government in meeting the communications technology-related needs of our communities?

Robinson said their finding was that the community strongly supports local government working to ensure internet services and devices are affordable and available to all, but for digital and multimedia literacy training, the supported approach is through partnerships with trusted community organizations and entities. Tabora-Roberts added that there is skepticism with the trust on government entities. The public does not believe that their government will be able to support with affordable internet. Businesses view internet as essential to their operation and essential to their employees.

Rivers said that in cable customer services, a huge majority said there is an issue with customer service and that regulation is necessary.

Tabora-Roberts mentioned that especially among communities of color and people living with disabilities, people worry about their security and privacy online.

Highlights for question 5: What has been the impact within our communities of the existing public benefit requirements of the cable franchise agreement?

Robinson mentioned that overall, there is positive outcomes of the Community Technology Grants since 2012. Viewership of local community access channel programming has developed over time and production has increased. Robinson said that even though more than two-thirds of viewership is through cable, but people do appreciate and still watch local community access programs. Robinson said that I-Net has met the increasing bandwidth needs of these public institutions, equating to a 90-120 % increase every 18 months.

Highlights for question 6: How have our communities' access to communications technology changed in the past 10 years?

Robinson said the capacity of today's network is through the roofs, both wireline and wireless, has substantially increased over the past 10 years. This is true for both public and private networks. A smaller percentage of households has cable television, but more households have broadband and internet services in comparison to 10 years ago. People continue to access content in new and different ways, however, because of the diversity of the population, people still continue to access content in traditional ways. More people are creating video content on their own but are still using the low-cost training and higher capability equipment and facilities provided by the community media centers. Residents' views about a local government role for protection of privacy, security, and consumer issues and regulation of the public right-of-way have not changed since 10 years ago, although concerns about these issues have increased.

Chair Studenmund appreciated the amazing abundance of information in the presentation. She appreciated that Robinson closed with the mention that we both share the same views about the government's role as we did 10 years ago. Even though technology has changed, we still care about the need for local government and security and protection.

Harden asked about far East Portland and which areas were covered. Robinson said that there was representation in the qualitative survey. Harden asked if the need or no desire was that indicative of a certain group, i.e. social economic or by age group. Rivers said that the majority is seniors and a young group that is low-income that work and go to school or go to the café to get their internet, so they don't need it or desire to have home internet.

Harden mentioned the Wood Village meeting with City council in October and he anticipates council will say that there is no room for municipal broadband because it's hard to justify the cost. Are there items that would be a concern to us from CTC? Robinson said that CTC has only responded with their financial data and could only comment on that point. He said that once a network reaches a certain point, it is hard to compete with them.

Thomas mentioned what it looked like to use internet at a café years ago, it was hard, and it cost money, and asked about the preference of the population on the type of internet. Robinson said that if we look at cable subscriptions, the numbers have climbed. Cable companies bundle it to provide internet and it's cheap for a year and then it gets more expensive. Largely, the preference lies in the senior population that is interested in home internet. Thomas asked about demographics and about the eastern Europe population and the need to reach out. Can assumptions be made from the data to do more outreach in this area? Robinson said it was going to be challenging. He said they spoke with counties about AI and the like, which is starting to take off.

Studenmund spoke about the senior population and wondering how she and her household will experience going forward. Robinson said that the pandemic has really opened people's eyes about technology. Robinson mentioned about 5G and that it is a constant learning process.

Perez appreciated all the information and Julie Omelchuck's leadership and MHCRC staff and consultant work.

*R2. Launch the 2021 Community Technology Grant Cycle

DeBey mentioned that staff recommends that the Commission allocate \$800,000 for Community Technology grants in the FY2020-21 competitive process and establish a Pre-Application deadline of December 10, 2020.

Annually the committee allocates funds and establishes the pre-application deadline for the community technology grant cycle. The preparation will open in October and it will be announced. Organization will apply through an online pre application process by December 10th. At the Jan 2021 meeting, the commissioners will review and decide which pre-applications they would like staff to pursue within the 800k available for funding. Finally, staff will work with the chosen organizations to finalize the full application and the commission will approve final contracts at a future MHCRC meeting.

Harden mentioned that he really like the format with which the organizations will be evaluated and suggested adding how this supports certain populations etc. DeBey noted and will look for ways to incorporate that data.

McIntire expressed concerns with meeting the timeline and if it was going to be enough time. She feels that time is moving really fast. DeBey explained that the cycle typically opens up in October and there will be 3-4 months to finalize the applications and get a sense of what the organizations will be able to implement by that time.

Studenmund appreciates the much more efficient process of handling the grants process. Thomas mentioned that it was definitely a lot harder to evaluate the applicants before.

MOTION: Thomas moved to approve the Commission allocate \$800,000 for Community Technology grants in the FY2020-21 competitive process and establish a Pre-Application deadline of December 10, 2020. Dennerline seconded.

VOTE: 6-0

Staff Activity Reports and Updates

- Perez mentioned the commission received a Newsletter the week prior to the meeting in which the staff provided updates relating to Public Policy/Legislative/FCC, Comcast Franchise Renewal Process, and MHCRC Community Grants Program Updates.
- Perez announced that there are two new hires that OCT will make this year. The financial analyst position post closes next week and she is looking forward to selecting a start date. The second position is an MHCRC manager to take place prior to Omelchuck's departure in December.
- Perez announced that Mayor Ted Wheeler, under executive order, moved OCT under commissioner Eudaly's oversight.
- Perez announced Commissioners will be assigned a new email to handle MHCRC business. An email with instructions will be provided by Bea Coulter. McIntire appreciates the newsletter, the MHCRC email, and the hard work this summer.

New Business; Commissioner Open Comment

- Committee Appointments

Perez spoke about the Committee Roster listing new committees and participation in those committees. Committees include: Finance Committee, Equity and Inclusion Committee and Policy Committee.

Thomas wanted a copy of the individual commissioner roster. Diaz Calvo noted and will send out the document after the meeting.

Perez went over the roster of committees.

Cinthia to send out the separate document to commissioners.

- Meeting Schedule:
 - October 19 – Remotely
 - November – Recess
 - December 21 – Remotely
 - January 18 – Remotely

Committee Reports

- Finance Committee – Thomas said they are review the budget and finances for this year and working together with staff to move forward on that.
- Equity Committee – Roche mentioned the committee went over the application process and pre application.
- Policy Committee – Harden said they are trying to schedule their first meeting for early-October. Harden sent Coulter ideas about what the work of what the committee might be, and they have an outline for the first meeting already. The next step will be to determine the work and what specific issues will be tracked and who will we be working with to track that.
- Open Signal Board Appointee – Murphy not present.
- MetroEast Board Appointee – Dennerline said the Board is meeting Tuesday evening. No updates for today.

McIntire asked about the committees and public notices and compliance since there is more than three members of the commissioner participating at some of these committees. Perez explained that measures are being taken by doing public notices and taking minutes for website posting.

Franchisee Activity Report

- Zply – Zply representative not present.
- Comcast – Tim Goodman from Government Affairs at Comcast, said that Comcast Internet Essentials is still going on. Comcast has continued their support through that program, their continued sponsorship in which they provide the first 3 months of service for free. The programs have proved to be popular. They are keeping their comcast public internet open only for customers. They will roll out more than 1,000 Wi-Fi connected lift zones which will do is provide robust Wi-Fi to community center. Community investments have continued through their continued sponsorship of the Portland Film Festival. They are presenting their gala sponsor for NEIA. They are opening an additional retail store in the Lloyd District, on 1445 NE Weidler, in mid-November. Thomas wants Goodman to address questions about internet bandwidth since there some people think

the speed is going down. Goodman said that his son is the only one he has heard this complaint from. He said that the network in Portland is the best and that Comcast continues to split nodes which help with the bandwidth. He encourages if there are any complaints to please let him know. Roche mentioned complaints about internet being slow to nearly inexistent between 1- 3:30 pm every day in the Multnomah Village area. This has been reported and the issue hasn't been resolved. Tim noted Roche's request and will address that.

- Century Link – none.

PEG Provider Activity Report

- Open Signal – none.
- MetroEast Community Media – none.
- Public Comment: none.
- Adjourn: 8:42 pm

Respectfully submitted by:
Cinthia Diaz Calvo, Administrative Specialist