

Broadband Sub-Committee Meeting October 24, 2016

Chairman Reilly gave a summary of the State's Broadband Program Office (BPO) presentation on Round 2 of the grant process. Proposals must be submitted by November 30, 2016. The BPO will provide up to 80% of funding for approved projects.

Mike Tucker of the CEDC then showed maps of the County showing where the Charter PSC areas are that are currently unserved or underserved and thus eligible for BPO funding. These maps are based on the State BPO use of census blocks. Charter franchise areas were not designated on the maps.

While the specifics of the Charter plans under the PSC agreement are not public Chairman Reilly and Ann Mueller of Congressman Gibson's office stated that the first build out will reach 7,814 homes in the county and will eventually reach 14,400 homes when the program is completed.

Next on the agenda was a presentation by two of the other providers in the county, Mid-Hudson Cable and G-Tel.

Mid-Hudson was represented by Dave Fingar, the Chief Technology Officer and Stephen Souky, the Controller. They announced that as of June 30th of this year that Mid-Hudson Cable's entire system was capable of 100 Mb/sec service.

They are exploring potential expansion and the possibility of applying for BPO funding in Phase 2 but at this point they did not have specifics in terms of service or areas.

Mid-Hudson also has a wireless ISP known as Mid-Hudson Data which did receive funds from round 1 to expand that service. There are three levels of service offered 10/2, 15/3 and 25/4—first number is advertised download speed and second number is advertised upload speed.

G-Tel was represented Jason Shelton, the General Manager. G-Tel is focused on fiber expansion and is in the process of installing some 110 linear miles of new fiber. Shelton pointed out the terms of the BPO require all construction that uses grant money be completed by the end of 2018 which is somewhat of a hardship for small companies with limited staff resources. Further there is currently a shortage of fiber optic cable with delivery times of 8 weeks. He did say that the BPO has met with Corning—the major manufacturer—and all recipients of state funding will get priority which may reduce the lead time to 6 weeks.

G-Tel's goal is to install equipment capable of Gigabit speeds. Quick note here—consumers often confuse bit and byte. Speeds for internet connections are always in bits and there 8 bits to a byte. For perspective 1 megabyte is 8 million bits.

Supervisor Pat Grattan in response to a suggestion by Connect Columbia checked with the County Attorney to see if the towns could negotiate as a group for better cable franchise agreements and the opinion was, yes they can.

Since the BPO deadline for Round 2 is November 30th it is unclear if there will be a November meeting of the subcommittee.