

Snowden Community Council Meeting Minutes 12.04.2024 (12.11.2024)

Council Members present online: Steven Banks, Robert Conner (Fire Commissioner), Roger Gadway (Chair), Fred Greef, Chuck Kliesh (Treasurer), Lloyd Olson (Vice Chair), Sherry Walston. Absent: Tom Montag (Fire Commissioner), Chris Stein. Also online were our two guest speakers, **Shane Milburn and Melissa Kephart from KCLICK-NET ISP**, and 13 additional Snowden Community members. Roger called the **Meeting to Order** at 7:00pm, and introduced Shane Milburn and Melissa Kephart, who live nearby in Klickitat, to give us an update on their Internet Service Provider (ISP) KCLICK-NET.

Shane began their presentation outlining their mission, and Melissa followed up explaining with use of PowerPoint slides their business model and the progress of current projects. Shane explained that when he and Melissa moved to Klickitat County they realized the lack of adequate rural Internet service. While they had the specialized skills to fix their own internet access, they understood that most of their neighbors did not, and then decided they could start a small local ISP with a commitment to providing high quality, reliable and affordable Internet service to rural Klickitat County (including their neighbors whom they would be seeing regularly in the grocery store!). Therefore, KCLICK-NET has a long-term business model that includes hiring local people, subcontractors and suppliers whenever possible; and offering no-contract, month-to-month Internet service at an affordable rate, which they estimate to be \$85 per month. Installation will be \$149 unless the driveway is much longer than 1,000 feet, or there are other special circumstances. They will deliver 100 Mbps upload/20 Mbps download and 500 Mbps upload/500 Mbps download high-speed service.

Addressing their progress in delivering this service so far, Shane first described how \$1.2 billion dollars in federal money is allocated to Washington State, and the State Broadband Office has been working to gather and check rural people's Internet accessibility so they can map unserved and under-served residences in groups, called project areas, of 1,000 each. Each project area will go up for bid by ISP providers. The winners will be awarded grant money to provide service to that project area. Terms of the federal money include that fiber will be used wherever possible- but a wireless/fiber hybrid can be used where necessary, due to the difficulties found in our rural circumstances. No federal money will be released until ALL the state's 236 project areas are spoken for, and every household within them has plans for service by ISP bidders. The State Broadband Office will be working to get all project areas assigned to bidders before May, 2025, in order to facilitate the release of funds. They will conduct two rounds of bidding before negotiating in round three with adjacent project area bidders to any unclaimed project areas. Open access is NOT required by the Broadband, Equity, Access & Deployment Program (BEAD). (BEAD funding is the federal money administered through the State Broadband Office.)

KCLICK-NET's pilot project is providing high speed Internet service to Trout Lake; they have established 12 miles of fiber connection, both aerial and underground, to 387 service locations – and 40 of these are now live and working, including internet service KCLICK-NET is providing for free at the Trout Lake Grange. As the federal BEAD funds were not yet released, this pilot project (which among other benefits will allow KCLICK-NET a chance to demonstrate their capacity to provide service and help them qualify for future grant money) is being funded by a combination of a loan/grant from the State Department of Commerce, and self-funding by KCLICK-NET. Trout Lake was chosen for the pilot project because it showed the most interest of any Klickitat County rural communities.

During questions and answers the following points were discussed: KCLICK-NET is willing to tap into existing fiber and infrastructure, including dark fiber (to save customers money) and existing fiber (to help distribute the network in a way that an outage in one location would stay localized and not bring the whole network down). One project area includes BZ Corner, Husum, parts of Trout Lake and parts of Snowden; another contains the rest of Snowden, Appleton, and Klickitat Heights (see map: <https://expressoptimizer.net/public/Washington/index.html>). The grants will release funding requiring accountability from the ISP's, including meeting specified milestones to receive additional funding, or losing the project if they fail to reach milestones. The federal timeline to get projects, including Snowden's, finished would be four years beginning in the summer of 2025. KCLICK-NET's timeline, should they be awarded the bids, is much shorter, because of their local rather than national service area. They could do the permitting and ordering of supplies in 3-6 months from their award, begin getting their approval on environmental and archeology plans, and from the PUD; and would commit to finishing in 3 years, though expect to be able to finish between 18 months and 2 years from the award. Melissa said

that they will have a letter of support from the Klickitat County Board of County Commissioners (BoCC) , but that KCLICK-NET also needs a letter of support from the Snowden Community Council to ensure the success of their bids. They need the letter of support, even though they have not heard of any other bidders for the Snowden jobs, as yet. The letter should express our need for reliable, affordable high-speed Internet service, and our preference for, and confidence in KCLICK-NET to provide it, and be delivered to KCLICK-NET by January 15, 2025.

Roger and community members thanked Shane and Melissa for their time and the very informative presentation, and then moved on to the regular SCC business meeting.

The November 06, 2024 DRAFT **Meeting Minutes** were approved as submitted (previously, by email).

Treasurer's Report: Chuck reported that the current SCC account balance is within a few cents of last month's balance of \$2,738. 63; as there has been no other activity than accruing interest. Hearing no objections, Roger pronounced the Treasurer's report accepted as given.

Additions to the Agenda: Roger added consideration of a letter of support for KCLICK-NET to provide the Snowden area groups with high speed affordable internet to the Agenda.

Old Business: Communications Committee: The Committee members reported that "all is going well" on both the website and the FB group, with some minor improvements and tweaks here and there. Sherry has opened some posts in the FB group to comments, and so far, that has gone smoothly, and she is proceeding cautiously.

Broadband Committee: Roger said the KCLICK-NET presentation had brought everyone up to date on getting high-speed affordable Internet in Snowden.

Land Use Committee: Eric reported that there is currently not a lot of activity by the Land Use (LU) Committee; however on December 12 they had a Zoom meeting with the Washington State Department of Commerce Long Range Planning and Growth Management Department. These are advisors to elected officials and citizens in "partial planning", low and slow-growth counties, such as Klickitat County, on how to understand and comply with State Growth Management requirements. Eric was pleased that the meeting helped the LU Committee members to understand State requirements for our county, and what services their department can and cannot provide to us. Best of all, the LU Committee now has a working relationship with this department, should we need their help in the future.

Steven presented a report on recent activities of the **Community Wildfire Prevention Plan (CWPP) Working Group**. He explained that crafting a CWPP can take months to years, but that he, Will Lyons, Dustin Chambers and Larry McCollum have met and already come up with an 8 step roadmap document. The Working Group is excited to have Will on board, as Will's business provides land management using herds of goats for land clearing, an important part of any wildfire management plan. Steve's summary of the next steps now that the Working Group has been formed, include Step 2: conferring with federal, state, local, fire district and land management agencies and businesses (for Example, Green Diamond, timber company owning large tracts of local forest lands), to find out what resources they may be able to share (such as equipment, manpower, fire behavior software). Step 3 will be to engage with "interested parties", such as the PUD, Underwood Conservation District, and the County. Step 4 will be to establish a community base map, and the Working Group has assurance from the Forest Service that they will provide some base map layers. Step 5 will be doing risk assessment studies on individual residences in the Snowden Community. Step 6 will be to use this risk assessment information to create a hazard assessment with recommendations. Step 7 includes developing strategies. Step 8 will be to finalize the CWPP, taking it to stakeholders for their buy-in, then getting the Plan certified by the DNR and Forest Service. They will then align with a 501c3 that can qualify the Plan to seek funding. (Read the roadmap: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1NG7dAceKVwtR0YzRvu6u6leHX0p39jwM/view?usp=drive_link) Larry offered to look into local CEKE organization that is a 501c3 organization that helps front smaller organizations (like the SCC) that are not.

New Business: The Chair and the Secretary (and everyone else) FORGOT(!) about the newly added Agenda Item to consider a letter of support for KCLICK-NET's bid on providing high speed Internet to the two project areas containing Snowden; so no action was taken.

Fire Commissioner's Report: Bob Conner said that there was nothing new to report, however, he offered an invitation for us all to come to a West Klickitat County Regional Fire Authority Board Meeting – every 3rd Thursday at 6:30 PM, at 119 NE Church Street, White Salmon, WA. There was discussion about the Mountain Brook Fire Station Burn Ban sign which has remained up, but should be taken down.

Bridge Commission Report: Eric reported that the next milestone in the progress of the new bridge will be a meeting December 16-18 to develop an “opinion of probable cost” of the final new bridge design.

For the Good of the Order: Roger pointed out that January's first Wednesday falls on the New Year's Day holiday, and asked what the Council preferred to do about it. Sherry moved, and Fred seconded to hold the next SCC meeting, at the usual time and place, on Wednesday, January 08, 2025. The motion passed unanimously.

Hearing no further comments, Roger **Adjourned** the meeting at approximately 8:45 PM)

Minutes respectfully submitted by

Bea Lackaff

(SCC Secretary (Pro Tem))