

An ATIC Public Meeting on Arizona Broadband Initiatives & Opportunities was held on Thursday, June 19 from 2-4 p.m. It featured a recap of Arizona's broadband progress, successful and not so successful programs, and a look forward to future initiatives. Ron Schott, ATIC Chair, was the Moderator.

Below is a brief summary of the highlights of the presentations.

* Roz Boxer of the Arizona Dept. of Commerce (<http://www.azcommerce.com/>) & Lisa Bergeron of Pinal County (<http://pinalcountyz.gov/>) recounted the Superior story, the revitalization of a small mining community and upcoming plans for greater Pinal and Gila Counties.

Here is what Roz had to say: A few years ago Mayor Hing of Superior was working with the Department of Commerce to discuss strategies for economic development. High speed Internet infrastructure was identified as a definite prerequisite. We brought in (GITA) representatives, such as Galen Updike, and Pinal County officials, such as Gene Walker, the IT Director. Together we discussed how to "make it happen," We then wrote an RFQ. 3 providers responded and WI-VOD won the award. On June 17 in 2007 we had a wire cutting ceremony to celebrate completion of the project. About 115 residents are on the network now, and it stretches from the Boyce-Thompson Arboretum to the town of Superior. There is a flower shop in Superior that uses the network extensively for mining company employees who are spread across the world to send flowers to their families.

We are now looking at doing something similar in La Paz County.

Lisa Bergeron then picked up the story: I have to commend the work done by Gene Walker, who was a prime mover for the project. My colleagues and I have been working to extend this work throughout Pinal County. Toward this end the Pinal Regional Wi-Fi Partnership was created. We are focusing on infrastructure and have committed to working with WI-VOD. We are now looking for funds from USDA and the CEDC of the DOC (for Superior and Eloy). Other communities are chipping in, such as Ak Chin, Gila River Reservation, Apache San Carlos Reservation. Dudleyville is another target. This is a model that could be used elsewhere.

A recent issue of TechConnect has a "Cut the Cord" article (p. 30) that relates to Pinal County and the Superior story.

* Derek White of the National Tribal Telecommunications Association (NTTA - <http://www.gilanet.net/nttA.htm>) comprised of tribally owned & operated telephone companies, delivered an informative presentation on Native American telecom efforts

around the state and the nation. Prior to his presentation Derek introduced Jose Matanane, General Manager of Fort Mojave Telecommunications and Bill Bryant, President and General manager of Saddleback Communications.

After reviewing some major NTTA accomplishments he addressed numerous tribal concerns including broadband issues, universal service, and others. His presentation tells it better than any summary can. It is being distributed with this email as "ATIC-NTTA 61908.pdf."

* Ladd Vagen, Director of Information Technology of the City of Flagstaff (<http://www.flagstaff.az.gov/>) discussed Flagstaff's earlier broadband assessment and strategic process, recent broadband connections of over 20 city buildings, and plans for wireless broadband. He delivered his address from Flagstaff over the remote connection.

Below is a summary of some of the points made by Ladd:

In Flagstaff our network grew haphazardly. We negotiated a contract with NPG to get fiber and lambda. We then partnered with NAU, Coconino Community College and the Flagstaff School District. The network is now up and running nicely. We have two connections at City Hall. All but two locations are connected with fiber. We are in the process of transitioning to VOIP, and we are trying to emulate what Superior has done. We are working with WI-VOD to do a wire-mesh network and also looking at setting up an anchor tenant model. We have a new mayor and city council that need to be educated on what has been done, so there is a bit of a learning curve involved.

In response to a question from the audience on how to create a coherent strategy in the community, Ladd replied that we brought all the interested parties together when we had WI-VOD talk to us and that helped greatly. It is very important to build partnerships in that way.

* David Heck, Deputy Chief Information Officer of the City of Tempe (<http://www.tempe.gov/>) on their citywide Wi-Fi partnership, its problems, future potential, and lessons learned.

Below is a summary of David's comments:

Well I was a wireless cowboy and it is still a rough ride. Tempe did not have a partnership as such. We created an RFP for a vendor to come into Tempe and we provided in-kind services. Kite Networks (originally a company called Gobility). The company just quit paying vendors – and it has been defunct since January. Since Tempe does not own the network we cannot offer it to anyone. We are currently negotiating with companies to get things going again. The

coverage area was 40 square miles. The original plan was to have 350 access points for the entire city. This grew to more than 900 nodes. Coverage was actually pretty good before it was shut down.

Would I have done something differently? There wasn't much we could have changed since mesh networks were still pretty new and relatively untested. Maybe we could have set up a performance bond that would last throughout the contract. We released it after the installation was complete.

On the operations side, you need to be aware of your customer needs (e.g., we were unable to provide wireless service in the home rather than off the street.) Another point is that the marketing could have been better.

Wire mesh is a good solution in rural areas. But in urban areas, you need to offer more than basic Wi-Fi services in order to be competitive.

Was this experience similar to the lessons learned from Iridium? Yes, there are similarities.

- Michael Stull, Manager, Government Relations, Cox Communications (<http://www.cox.com>) spoke about the efforts by Cox to provide broadband to rural Arizona communities.

Michael's comments are summarized below:

Cox is a private company founded as a newspaper company by James Cox, who in 1920 ran as a Presidential candidate with Franklin D. Roosevelt (FDR) as his Vice Presidential running mate.

So, what has Cox been doing in the rural areas in Arizona?

In Sierra Vista we have launched cable services up to 15 mbps and Cox purchased CableAmerica. In Douglas and Pirtleville, Cox used microwave relay to provide Douglas with 9 mbps.

Cox is launching a project in Casa Grande later this month.

The introduction of Extendible Optical Network (EON) allows Cox to implement DOCSYS 3.0 and raise data speeds up to 100 mbps.

* Deborah Dupée of Advanced Tech Systems gave a great presentation on broadband initiatives in other states, emphasizing best practices and lessons learned from around the nation. Her presentation is being distributed with this email as "Best Practices_Lessons Learned_ATIC PublicMeeting_Rev1_21june08.ppt."