

As promised, here is an email follow-up to the meeting. Initially, it was just going to be a verification that you were all receiving emails launched from the web app, but given the news today, I'll attempt to address briefly the FCC debacle as well.

First, thank you to Stephanie for getting the minutes out so promptly. I have posted all our minutes thus far on the site in pdf form. Rather than taking time at the meeting for approval and all that, I think it will work to just add comments as I've done on this one. I will attempt to have a concise agenda for the next meeting so it will be easier to take accurate minutes. Any topic on the agenda that requires a disposition/action will have one before proceeding to the next. Hopefully there will be time for open discussion at the end. I know, I sound a bit tyrannical, but the combination of topics can overwhelm us if we're not disciplined.

Besides, my role model for serving on boards, committees and such was Josef Stalin. I notice early on that he was Secretary, not President, and it worked well for him. Editing newsletters helped also – the truth was what I said it was. Feel free, Stephanie, to halt the meeting until you are satisfied you have a clear action from the committee. My first major board position was under a president who had no interest in procedure or organization, so it was up to me to force the issue. It worked.

So – you should know that the FCC voted to repeal the net neutrality rule, as we had feared. This throws an additional wild card into the mix. I know at least one lawsuit has already been filed. I'll send along Angus King's email as well. I'll attempt to share what thoughts I have on the matter here.

We already have a mix of controversy, with the definition of what constitutes “broadband,” methods of achieving it, such as “fiber,” 4GL, etc. etc. Yes, I will attempt to provide at least a short answer to Rachel's persistent frustration with the fiber question. It has nothing to do with diet, but yes, all other things being equal, it's currently the most desirable solution to signal delivery.

Notice my weasel word “currently” and the “all other things being equal” qualifier. Might as well throw in “it depends.” Which is faster – 4GL wireless that you can have versus fiber cable that you can't? That's one of the main arguments now. Fiber is expensive, takes a long time to build, and is likely never economically feasible for “the last mile” or anywhere that customer density is insufficient. Not having wires, wireless is somewhat less susceptible to outages.

Those who insist on “fiber or nothing” argue that if you settle for less, you'll never get it. And so on. As for defining what BB is, here is what the FCC says: “...the agency defines as providing download speeds of 25 megabits per second (Mbps) and upload speeds of 3 Mbps.” Which means...what? Not much - “it depends” on what you are doing. Upload of 3Mbps is quite inadequate for many endeavors but fine for others. What's scary about the FCC ruling is that not only will we be subject to what physical infrastructure is available to us, but that the internet providers (Comcast, Fairpoint, whatever TW is called) decide we should have and who gets it first. Even worse, I've been told the next evil step is to transfer administration to the Federal Trade Commission, which fits with their reclassification of the internet from a utility – like phone, electricity, etc. to an “information service.” I'll let you ponder the significance of that at your leisure. It is not a pleasant thought.

My view is that we first find out what we have as best we can and fight to preserve it. This ruling can be overturned, corrective legislation can be passed etc. It will be hard to sing the praises of 'net based businesses etc. until we have some idea of what is going to happen. The internet can be the savior of rural communities such as ours, but unless it is as uniformly and reliably available as electricity and phone, we could find the faucet is only dripping.

Either way, we have our work cut out for us.