WEBMAIL

THE NEXT CENTURY CITIES BIWEEKLY NEWSLETTER

JUNE 3, 2020

NEXT CENTURY CITIES IS WORKING TO KEEP MEMBERS CONNECTED

Zanesville, OH

NCC HOSTS DISCUSSION URGING LOCAL LEADERS TO PARTICIPATE IN STATE AND FEDERAL POLICYMAKING.

On May 27, 2020, Next Century Cities hosted a webinar led by policy experts and researchers from Pew Charitable Trusts and Benton Institute for Broadband & Society. Kathryn de Wit and Jon Sallet identified ways for local officials to engage in state and federal policy-making. Presenters and participants agreed on the importance of elevating local connectivity challenges. The webinar can be viewed in its entirety here.

NCC SUBMITS REPLY COMMENTS ON LIFELINE AND POLE ATTACHMENT POLICIES.

NCC followed up on comments filed on April 20, 2020, which explained the impact that the FCC's reclassification of broadband services under Title I could have on the stability of the Lifeline program. The May 18th reply comments reiterated why the Lifeline program is a tool for local officials seeking ways to connect low-income residents. NCC stressed why de facto pole attachment policies could interfere with broadband deployment.

WHAT'S INSIDE

Nashville, TN

NCC Has Asked the FCC to Strengthen the Lifeline Program. Its Plan to Streamline the Application Process for Rural Tribal Consumers Is A Step in the Right Direction. As part of ongoing COVID-19 relief efforts, on June 1, 2020, the FCC announced plans to ease application and enrollment process rules for Lifeline consumers living on rural Tribal lands. For local officials working desperately to connect low-income residents with broadband services, it means that more of those in need will be able to use Lifeline as a tool to get and stay connected. The new eligibility updates will be in effect until August 31, 2020. Read more here.

NCC Participates in Aspen Digital Roundtable on COVID-19 and high-speed Connectivity. Telecommunications and technology policy experts convened for a roundtable discussion on ways to expand broadband access in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. During the May 27th meeting, NCC's Francella Ochillo shared insights on unique connectivity challenges that local officials and communities continue to face in the wake of COVID-19.

The FCC and Online Censorship. Next Century Cities' Policy Counsel Ryan Johnston penned an op-ed examining the the recent Executive Order on Preventing Online Censorship and the Federal Communications Commission's role in administering the Executive Order.

NCC Appears on the Broadband Bunch Podcast. Executive Director Francella Ochillo recently sat down with Craig Corbin of the Broadband Bunch podcast to discuss why community partnerships and local voices are integral components of strategies to close the digital divide. Listen to the episode here.

Broadband Is Critical to Turning Local Economies Around. Local economies have been heavily impacted by COVID-19, and those effects are exacerbated when communities struggle with broadband accessibility. NCC's Policy Fellow, Oscar Lopez, wrote an op-ed detailing the role that reliable broadband access plays in reviving local economies.

BRIDGING THE GAP ONE APP AT A TIME:

How the Consumer Technology Association is Supporting Efforts to Connect Houston Residents

The Consumer Technology Association (CTA) is a member-based standards and trade organization representing 2,200 companies nationwide. It advocates and provides space for the technology industry to share and advance innovative practices. CTA also hosts the annual Consumer Electronics Show, a platform for tech influencers to display emerging technologies and share ideas.

In addition to hosting convenings for tech industry experts, CTA has a commitment to giving back through the service arm of the organization, The Consumer Technology Association Foundation. The CTA Foundation centers service through technology. In fact, one of the organization's focuses is helping individuals gain broadband access, master technology, and navigate online. CTA has provided $700,000 in grant funding toward this cause, partnering with several organizations nationwide.

One of the organizations directly benefiting from the CTA Foundation is the Houston chapter of Easter Seals. The chapter's BridgingApps program teaches differently-abled and senior residents how to use mobile devices to enhance their daily lives. Both populations are among those most likely to struggle with broadband adoption. With the help of funding from the CTA Foundation, Easter Seals of Greater Houston will be able expand the BridgingApps resources and its website.

Next Century Cities works to amplify initiatives that help improve broadband adoption. The initiatives supported by CTA are an example of efforts needed to close the digital divide.

JOIN US FOR AN INFORMATION SESSION WITH WANDER

Tuesday, June 23, 2020
2 P.M. ET/11 A.M. PT
Register for the Presentation Here.

Are you searching for new or alternative Internet access solutions for residents? Join us for an informational session with David Fields, Founder and CEO of Wander, to learn more about the fixed wireless service provider and its work with municipalities to expand low-cost, high-speed Internet service.

MEMBER NEWS

**We would like to extend a warm welcome to our
newest members, Bristol, Connecticut, and Firestone, Colorado.**

Bristol, CT

Firestone, CO

Zanesville, OH: The results of an Ohio University survey led by Dr. Laeeq Khan are detailed in a study titled "Digital inequality in the Appalachian Ohio: Understanding how demographics, internet access, and skills can shape vital information use". The study reveals that overwhelmingly unreliable Internet access in the Appalachian region of Ohio has contributed to developmental gaps among residents. Zanesville, OH, an NCC member city, is among the Appalachian Ohio cities.

Wilson, NC: A recent episode of NPR's Planet Money podcast sat down with Grant Goings, Wilson's city manager, to discuss what happened when Wilson residents decided to build their own fiber optic network.

Cedar Falls and Ottumwa, IA: Iowa Governor Kim Reynolds announced $26.2 million in federal relief funding to expand broadband access for unserved and underserved students in communities across the state. The grant is part of the Governor's Emergency Education Relief Fund authorized by the CARES Act. The state is currently conducting surveys among families with primary, secondary, and postsecondary students to determine which areas have the greatest need.

New Hampshire Electric Cooperative (NHEC) Wants to Expand to Include Broadband. The NHEC has more than 80,000 customers in 115 communities across the state of New Hampshire. The cooperative argues that expanding their offerings to include broadband, would help connect areas with little or unreliable access. If successful, NHEC would be the first cooperative in the northeastern part of the United States to offer broadband service. **New Hampshire** is home to three NCC municipalities, **Bedford, Hanover, and Keene.**

BROADBAND NEWS

House Majority Whip James E. Clyburn (SC-06) and U.S. Representative Fred Upton (MI-06) introduced the Rural Broadband Acceleration Act on May 28th. The bill directs the Federal Communications Commision to immediately fund high-speed internet projects, providing reliable broadband access to residents within a year's time. **(The Wall Street Journal)**

Neil D'Souza and Lawrence Kosick founded GetSetup to acclimate older adults to digital technology. The site houses Zoom courses that teach seniors how to order groceries online, navigate healthcare websites, and add rideshare applications like Uber to their smartphones. **(Forbes)**.

REQUESTS FOR PROPOSALS

Expanding Broadband to NYCHA Residents. As part of the New York City Internet Master Plan, the New York City Mayor's Office of the Chief Technology Officer is seeking Internet providers to help close the existing digital divide among residents of the New York City Housing Authority. Providers of all sizes are encouraged to respond to the request. The deadline for submissions is June 30, 2020. Read about the initiative and request here. Learn about the request and submission process here.

Call for Illinois Connected Communities Grant Applications. The Illinois Connected Communities grant program will assist counties, cities, villages, or school districts in planning and capacity building, laying the groundwork for improved broadband access, adoption, and utilization. Illinois Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity (DCEO) grants of up to $15,000 will be provided on a competitive basis with applications accepted through June 12th. Click here to watch the informational webinar on applying for the grant program.

Request for a Broadband Consultant in Johnston, IL. The City of Johnston, seeks a consultant that will conduct a broadband visioning and needs assessment and assist local officials and residents with identifying potential providers. Proposals should be submitted to Adam Plagge (aplagge@cityofjohnston.com), the City's Economic Development Manager, by the July 1st deadline. Learn more about the request here.

STAY CONNECTED

Send us photos of your community and your next-generation broadband successes. We want to share your good news and photos of our member communities. If you have photos you would like to include in our next newsletter, please send them to **Brittany-Rae Gregory.**

Does your city, town, or county have a new mayor, commissioner, or supervisor? If so, please email **Lukas Pietrzak** so we can update our records.

Send us your Requests for Proposals (RFPs). Our **website** includes a subscription box that allows individuals to sign up for an alert whenever a new RFP is announced. Our goal is to get your RFP more attention, giving you better options during the selection process. We have already received dozens of subscriptions from a wide variety of vendors, so please be sure to **send us your RFPs**. You can visit **this page** to read current and past RFPs from other cities as well.

Is your city currently involved in civic engagement projects that leverage technology to benefit the community? Let us know! We would like to feature your community in upcoming blog posts and reports.

Is there someone from your community that you think should be added to this list? Send us their contact information.