

Broadband Advisory Council

Hello Sublette County, last legislative session the Legislature passed a series of bills that put into policy some of the concepts that Governor Mead's Economically Needed Diversification of Wyoming (ENDOW) Executive Committee put forward. One of these initiatives was to improve broadband in Wyoming. The Legislature passed Senate File 100 to accomplish this goal. The bill creates a broadband grant program for unserved areas of Wyoming. The bill also creates a Broadband Advisory Council and State Broadband Coordinator, who will have the tasks of developing a statewide broadband enhancement plan and a broadband mapping effort. If this state wants to diversify its economy and be relevant in the 21st century, then we need high quality, high speed, affordable broadband across the state. It is essential that the rural parts of Wyoming not be left out, because broadband has become the communication method of choice today, not just in the future.

The Broadband Advisory Council was appointed by the Governor. The Chief Information Officer for the State of Wyoming is also required by statute to sit on the Council. Further, two legislative liaisons were appointed. I was appointed by the Speaker of the House to serve as the House's liaison to the Council. The Council had its first organizational meeting in Riverton June 26-27.

The Broadband Advisory Council must have a Wyoming Broadband Enhancement Plan in place by September 1, 2018, which is a short timeline. The Council heard from both Utah and Minnesota on the direction those states went with a broadband plan. We got updates from the Wyoming Department of Transportation (WYDOT) and Wyoming Enterprise Technology Services (ETS) on broadband efforts in Wyoming. ETS operates the Wyoming Unified Network, a public/private partnership that brings broadband to all of the State's public schools, community colleges, and state facilities. WYDOT is critical to the conversation because they have rights of way corridors throughout the state, which can be a conduit for broadband infrastructure.

How can the State of Wyoming work with its private telecommunication partners to provide better internet to Wyoming citizens and businesses? A business case, where a private internet provider makes a profit, simply does not exist in much of Wyoming to extend fiber to business areas, and fiber is key to business recruitment.

Locally, towns, county, and state representatives continue to work on an effort to improve broadband in the business corridors and create more fiber redundancy in Sublette County.

If you have input for the Wyoming Broadband Advisory Council or our local efforts, please contact me at albert@albertsommers.com. Sublette Senator Dan Dockstader is my Senate counterpart on the Council, which means Sublette County is well represented. Our next in-person meeting is July 30-31 in Cheyenne.