

# MAIN STREET MONTANA PROJECT

A BUSINESS PLAN *For Montana by Montanans*

## Interconnectivity and Telecommunications KIN Meeting Minutes

April 29, 2015

10:00 AM – 3:00 PM

Helena, Montana

### **Co-Chairs:**

Bill Squires, Blackfoot Telecommunications Group

Rob Ferris, Vision Net

### **KIN Members Present:**

Chris Warden, Washington Companies, Missoula

Paul DeWolfe, Access Consulting, Missoula

Jason Moothart, CenturyLink, Billings

Darryl Rensmon, Morrison-Maierle, Helena

Sarah Walsh, PayneWest Insurance, Helena

Thelma McClosky Armstrong, Billings Clinic, Billings (via video conference)

Erin Lutts, Mid-Rivers Communications, Glendive (via audio bridge)

Paul Roble, Stockman Bank, Miles City (via audio bridge)

Joe Sullivan, Montana Sky, Kalispell (via audio bridge)

Martha Tate, Electric Lightwave/ Integra, Denver (via audio bridge)

### **Staff/Public:**

Jim Molloy, Governor's Office

Dan Lloyd, Governor's Office of Economic Development

Michaela Wolfinger, Montana Department of Commerce

### **Innovation and Technology KIN Update:**

The presentation and discussion were led by Don Beeman. Don was with Merck Pharmaceuticals for 25 years; he started Topaz Pharmaceuticals (which was sold to Sanofi Pharmaceuticals); and he started Ligocyte Pharmaceuticals (which was sold to Takeda Pharmaceuticals).

### **I & T KIN Process –**

- Complete SWOT analysis

- Leverage strong history of Montana biotech

  - GSK, Hamilton

  - Rocky Mountain Labs, Hamilton

  - Lygocite, Bozeman

- Similar opportunities

  - Tech

  - Software

I & T KIN SWOT –

University System

Strength

Growth opportunity

Weakness

Losing talent (opportunity to bring them back)

Cost to market

Trend of large companies purchasing small R&D companies

Try to keep employees in Montana

Promote Montana as a good place for business –

Dollar goes a long way

Bring talent back to Montana

Develop communications directed at business opportunities

Build on existing promotion programs/initiatives

Promote local venture capital/angel funds

Montana needs to give out more “coupons”

Align education with business needs –

\$15 million R&D budget at MUS

Public/private partnerships are critical to success

Build talent pool

Financing –

High tech is high cost

State match – SBIR/STTR

Discussion with the group:

I & T KIN views broadband as a critical success component

Access/affordability issue

Urban versus rural issue

I & K KIN has not discussed education networks

Education

Communicate skills needs to high schools and MUS

Work with MUS and 2-year colleges to develop curriculum/certification

Edulog and ADF International have done this

Develop elementary and middle school mentoring programs

Show and promote opportunities

Develop needs realistically

2-year program job skills are important

PHD skills are important

STEM initiatives

Is the “Montana premium” real?

Will it attract the needed talent?

Wages must be raised to compete for talent

Work with others  
    Hi-tech Alliance, Blackstone LaunchPad, etc.  
Remote workforce  
    Telecommute  
    Hire outside Montana if necessary

**Montana Chamber Legislative Update:**

Glenn Oppel, Government Relations Director, discussed the Chamber's focus in the 2015 Legislature.

Glenn addressed the specifics of legislation concerning:

    Business equipment tax  
    Tax "lookback" reduction for individuals and sole proprietors  
    Tax reappraisal intervals  
    Tax simplification  
    Infrastructure  
    Coal trust fund use  
    Pollution control  
    Workforce training tax credits  
    2-year college training

**REACH Montana Telehealth Network:**

Gene Kopyy, Benefis Health System, presented an extensive view of the impacts of telehealth in central Montana.

    Radiology file sharing between hospitals began in 1993  
    REACH is part of the Montana Telehealth Alliance  
    Effort supported by all hospitals involved  
    Would not be practical without federal government support (Rural Healthcare program)  
    Future – healthcare will be where you are  
        Home  
        Walmart, Walgreens, CVS

**Governor's Office Legislative Update:**

Dan Lloyd, Governor's Office of Economic Development, described the focus during the 2015 Legislature.

Dan addressed the specifics of legislation concerning:

    Infrastructure  
    Long range IT appropriations  
    Broadband support  
    911 fund distribution  
    Zoning requirements for economic development districts  
    Small business economic analysis  
    Patent trolling

**Future Topics/Guests:**

Governor Steve Bullock

Meg O'Leary, Director, Department of Commerce

Pam Bucy, Commissioner, Department of Labor and Industry

OPI, School Superintendents, etc.

**Closing Discussion:**

Next meeting in 60–90 days, depending on Governor Bullock's schedule

Goal to have recommendations to Governor before end of 2015