

This is a printer friendly version of an article from zanesvilletimesrecorder.com
To print this article open the file menu and choose Print.

[Back](#)

Article published Jul 24, 2007

Broadband Task Force meets

Group seeks expanded high-speed Internet access in Appalachian Ohio

By KATHIE DICKERSON
Staff Writer

COSHOCTON - The first meeting of a committee designed to bring improved high-speed broadband access to Appalachia Ohio met Monday in Coshocton County.

The Broadband Task Force was formed earlier this month by Congressman Zack Space (D-Dover) and is comprised of public officials, local leaders and representatives of the telecommunications industry.

During the first meeting the group discussed developing a mission statement and some rules and regulations.

Space said he expects them to be informal gatherings where member have an opportunity to speak freely.

"I don't expect we're going to solve all the world's problems today," he said.

Each of the 12 members on the task force had an opportunity convey concerns and issues with broadband deployment in their regions.

Carroll County Commissioner Tom Wheaton said the villages in his county are served with broadband access.

"The majority of our population is not," he said.

The county is currently exploring the option of deploying broadband over power lines.

Gary Little is on the committee as president of the Information Technology Alliance of Appalachian Ohio.

Broadband access isn't just something that's necessary for business, but ITTAAO's membership has indicated it's necessary for consumers to be able to access businesses via the Web, he said.

Representatives of the telecommunications industry are part of the task force because without their participation it would be meaningless, Space said.

He asked for cooperation from them and help to come up with clear and concise information of where broadband access is available and where it is not.

"I'd like to see this task force be a clearinghouse for the exchange of information," said Chris Vaughn, who represents the Ohio Cable Telecommunications Association.

He said the public needs to be better educated on why there's a need for high-speed broadband connections in order to increase demand.

Sue Shipitalo, with the Coshocton Community Resource Network, said that's been proven here locally.

By providing community resource centers where the public has access to high-speed Internet service, a later poll revealed the number of homes in the area with a computer increased by 50 percent, Shipitalo said.

Randy Hunt, director of the Ohio Rural Development Office for the U.S.D.A., said there is good news regarding funding for the telecommunications companies willing to provide network access.

Language regarding loans has been included in the 2007 Farm Bill in order to facilitate the process and expand the number of companies eligible, he said.

Space said at the next meeting, in about three months, he like would like to have information presented on the various technologies available for delivering broadband and what strengths and weaknesses they represent for deployment in Appalachian Ohio. He'd also like to see a map of where access is currently available and where it's not.

Dwayne Sattler, director of public affairs and public policy with the Ohio Supercomputer Center, said Gov. Ted

Strickland's office is in the process of setting up a similar task force for Ohio.

"A region coming together like this puts it ahead of everyone else," he said.
