

BOLINAS FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT

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March 16, 2017

Via email You-Young.Sellden@cpuc.ca.gov

Ms. Clover Sellden
Regulatory Analyst
California Public Utilities Commission
Communications Division
505 Van Ness Avenue, Third Floor
San Francisco, California 94102-3298

RE: CPUC Staff White Paper: "High Impact Areas for Broadband Availability"

Dear Ms. Sellden:

I am writing to express the strong support of the Bolinas Fire Protection District ("BFPD") for the methodology and approach of the California Public Utilities Commission ("CPUC") Staff White Paper: "High Impact Areas for Broadband Availability" ("Staff White Paper"). Specifically, we applaud the identification of Bolinas as one of the "high impact areas" where the maximum impact can be obtained for the limited remaining pool of California Advanced Services Fund ("CASF") Broadband Infrastructure Grant/Revolving Loan Account grant funds. We concur that a pool of unserved and underserved residences (and also businesses and community institutions) in a geographically confined area, where the cost of service per household is more economical, is a sound methodology for maximizing the impact of these limited funds.

The BFPD provides first responder services in the greater Bolinas area and has done so since 1954. We rely on and work very closely with the Stinson Beach Volunteer Fire Department, the Marin County Fire Department, and the Point Reyes National Seashore, responding frequently into surrounding jurisdictions. As a volunteer fire department, the BFPD survives because of the support and involvement of the tight-knit community of Bolinas. We are aware of the leadership role taken by the Bolinas Community Public Utility District ("BCPUD") on the effort in our community to improve broadband internet access in Bolinas by forming an Internet Access Committee and working closely with the County of Marin, specifically with Marin County Supervisor, Dennis Rodoni (District 4) and the Marin Broadband Task Force ("MBTF"). Supervisor Rodoni is the head of the MBTF and is the Marin County representative on the Oversight Committee of the North Bay-North Coast Broadband Consortium ("NBNCBC"). Supervisor Rodoni and the MBTF strongly support our community's efforts to improve internet access for the Bolinas community.

The current lack of adequate broadband access across the Bolinas area has critical impacts on our public safety network. The remote location of the town of Bolinas tends to isolate the BFPD from opportunities to further our education and training. The vast majority of our volunteer firefighters have full time jobs outside of town, severely limiting the time they have to dedicate to the BFPD. We have tried to address this issue by providing critical training, and safety standards and policies information via an online system. We have had limited success due to slow connectivity, streaming ability, and at times, firefighters with no internet connection at all. In addition, Bolinas relies on a dedicated group of residents that form the Bolinas Disaster Council. Again, in order to sufficiently recruit and train members, the internet is imperative as people have less and less time in their busy lives to be physically present. The lack of adequate broadband access severely inhibits our ability to recruit and retain volunteers. In addition, we have worked in recent years to provide community members and visitors with critical information regarding safety issues during our storm season as well as our high fire danger season. We have been largely unsuccessful due to the lack of reliable service, and for some residents, complete lack of service. Given that interactive communications with residents during emergencies through an internet based system is largely taken for granted in other areas of Marin County and the State, the residents of Bolinas and thousands of visitors to the area should be allowed the same level of expectation.

Though the BFPD is relatively small, we have the same administrative requirements as larger departments. We have financial relationships with organizations such as the County of Marin, our retirement system, insurance companies as well as Federal and State organizations that *require* our District to report information via the internet. The current internet capability in Bolinas is woefully insufficient to support these requirements which lead us to spend excessive time and energy submitting information via other means.

In closing, we are confident that reliable broadband internet access will benefit the BFPD and make Bolinas a safer community. We believe that Bolinas residents fully support the effort of our local utility district to improve broadband access and the identification of Bolinas by CPUC staff as a "high impact area" is a critical step in the process. Thank you very much for considering our comments.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Anita Tyrrell-Brown", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Anita Tyrrell-Brown
Fire Chief

cc: Supervisor Dennis Rodoni