

Committee explores options for internet networks and providers

Planning process paves way for high-speed internet connectivity in Caldwell Parish

(Columbia, LA) Caldwell Parish residents and businesses are one step closer to seeing improved broadband availability and speeds following actions taken by the Police Jury and the newly appointed Broadband Committee.

"Since its formation in July, the Caldwell Parish Broadband Committee has been engaged in discussions with several internet providers, representatives from Louisiana Connect, the state's broadband office, and local stakeholders," said James L. Carroll, chairman of the Broadband Committee. "Our goal is, and has been, to develop a broadband proposal for our parish that will qualify for the state's broadband grant program."

According to Carroll, it quickly became apparent that navigating the grant process and finding a workable solution for providing high speed internet for Caldwell parish were complex processes that would require expert help. With the support of the Caldwell Parish Police Jury and the Caldwell Industrial Development Board, the Committee recently retained a broadband enablement consulting group to help the parish develop a plan and find a capable internet provider.

Telecommunications for Rural America (TFRA) is a company formed by former CenturyLink CEO Glen Post to assist rural communities in solving their broadband challenges and to identify providers dedicated to serving rural communities. "We are excited to be partnering with TFRA and the experience this team has with solving rural broadband availability," said Caldwell Parish Police Jury President Mark Black. "The Committee will work closely with TFRA to gather data and help identify existing service gaps."

The Broadband Committee has formed working groups and data gathering, survey preparation and network planning are now in progress.

According to James Carroll, the Committee plans to provide periodic updates to the public and will need the public's help in responding to surveys and helping the parish maintain a meaningful broadband dialogue.

Please visit <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/YJZ8QGQ> to access the Residential survey. If you are a business owner, please visit <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/YPP6SW3> for the Business survey.

The Caldwell Parish School District will be distributing information about this survey through their Blackboard Communication system.

If you do not have internet access, the staff at the library will assist you on a computer at the library or with a paper version of the survey. The paper version will also be available at the local banks, and Citizens Medical Center. Please complete the survey no later than December 3rd, so we can compile the results for our grant application.

If you have questions about the survey, please call Tammi Hartsfield at the library, (318)649-2259.