

## **Schumer will push for \$22M to create broadband ‘circle’**

By CRISTINE MEIXNER

Editor

INDIAN LAKE — U.S. Sen. Charles E. Schumer made his 11th trip to Hamilton County when he visited Indian Lake Central School last week.

Schumer announced he would be donating five surplus Senate computers to the school, but the real news is he is backing a regional application for about \$22 million in federal stimulus funds to expand broadband coverage.

Superintendent of Schools Mark Brand, Town Supervisor Barry Hutchins, members of the Board of Education and Hamilton County Board of Supervisors Chairman William Farber joined Schumer.

Schumer said he discovered the school needs computers and has great broadband, a T-1 line. “You have great faculty, good students and know how to use them,” Schumer said. “That put your school at the top of the list.

“Maybe it will save a little money and help your kids.”

### BROADBAND EFFORT

“That kind of bandwidth is the exception in the Adirondacks, not the rule,” Farber told Schumer.

He then explained a regional plan to extend broadband coverage in the Adirondacks, saying 25 percent of the land area of the state would be covered, and asked Schumer to throw his weight behind the effort.

Franklin, Clinton and Essex counties started Community Broadband Network (CBN) to duplicate the success the Development Authority of the North Country (DANC) has had providing broadband to St. Lawrence, Jefferson and Lewis counties.

Hamilton, Warren and Washington counties approached CBN about doing the same thing for them. CBN agreed and has been coordinating with DANC.

### MAKING A ‘CIRCLE’

DANC already has a connection to the upstate main switching station for all telecommunications in Syracuse, to which the New York State Office For Technology (OFT) fiber runs. The details were worked out by bringing the CBN and DANC together with OFT, Farber says.

OFT has “dark fiber” along the Northway that is not being utilized and “lit fiber” along the Thruway that is being used.

OFT has agreed to contract with CBN and DANC to trade bandwidth so all three have access to a fiber loop that will come down the Northway, west across the Thruway to Syracuse and connect to DANC there.

Then DANC will connect to CBN at the St. Lawrence / Franklin County border and CBN will provide the connection back to the Northway, creating a broadband “circle,” Farber said.

## LINKS WOULD FOLLOW

A lot of the infrastructure is already in place. If the federal stimulus application CBN recently submitted is successful the money will be used to finish this loop, and links would be added later to connect other areas.

CBN is looking in Hamilton County at places where there are gaps, such as between the towns of Indian Lake and Lake Pleasant, to provide redundancy for both Internet service and phone providers.

“One of the other pluses is DANC’s tariff through the Public Service Commission and the tariff CBN intends to pursue, which will mirror DANC’s.

“There is an equal charge for bandwidth no matter where you are in the coverage area. That differs dramatically from the way Verizon and other for-profits work, where you pay for bandwidth times distance,” Farber said.

## CELL TOWERS TOO

Cell towers need T-1 line access too, Farber explains. “If you are a cell provider trying to site a tower in Indian Lake or Lake Pleasant you have to approach whoever owns the lines in that area, such as Verizon, to purchase a T-1 line connection; the cost is based on distance.

“The upshot is we hope CBN’s open access network will be able to provide lower-cost T-1 access to cell providers, thereby making cell towers more economically viable in the Adirondacks.

## A ‘GOOD’ APPLICATION

The regional group has applied for a \$22 million grant from Phase 2 of the federal stimulus package, Farber said. He asked for and got Schumer’s pledge to support the application.

“One of the best parts of the stimulus bill,” Schumer said, “is \$7 billion for broadband in rural areas. I will push very, very hard for it and I think you will get it. It’s a very good application.”

Schumer said not as many applications were received as expected. Awards will be announced in the spring.