

Panel on Revitalization of Local Community and Ubiquitous Network Society
Summary of Minutes (2nd Meeting)

1. Date and Time

Thursday, December 14, 2006, 10:00 to 12:00

2. Location

Special Conference Room 1, 8F, Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications

3. Attendees (honorifics omitted)

(1) Panel Members

Shimizu (Chair), Aida, Iizumi (proxy: Machida), Kiyohara, Kotani, Kondo, Shimada, Sudo, Taki, Tsubota, Tsuyuki, Nagayoshi, Hatano, Wasai

(2) Guest Speaker

Mayor Kasamatsu of Kamikatsu-cho

(3) Observers

Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology; Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare; Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries; Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport

(4) MIC Representatives

Taniguchi (Parliamentary Secretary for Internal Affairs and Communications), Terasaki (Director-General of the Telecommunications Bureau), Katsuno (Deputy Director-General of Minister's Secretariat), Imabayashi (Director-General of the Regional Communications Development Division), Uematsu (Director of the Local Governments ICT Promotion Office), Nakata (Deputy-Director of the Regional Communications Development Division)

4. Minutes of the Meeting

(1) Opening

(2) Introducing the panel members and checking the documents distributed (Secretariat)

Attendance of the members

- Members who were attending the meeting for the first time were introduced: Sudo, Wasai
- Absent members: Ohyama, Uemura, Muraki

- Proxy: Machida for Iizumi
 - Katsuno, Deputy Director-General of Minister's Secretariat attended for the first time
- Checked the documents distributed

(3) Summary of minutes of the last meeting (Secretariat)

Reviewed Reference 2-1 as the summary of minutes of the last meeting.

- The reference to Kawai-machi in Iwate prefecture was recorded using the wrong kanji characters, which must be corrected.

(4) Agenda

<Presentation by Mr. Taki>

Mr. Taki made a presentation based on Reference 2-2 and VTR material, which was followed by a question and answer session.

[Questions and Answers]

- In regional communities, some food services and restaurants are operated by companies dedicated to the restaurant business, while others are operated by hotels and inns. It is important to deliver information in a timely manner to people visiting regional communities for business or pleasure.
- Gourmet Navigator started in 1996, well before Google was launched in 1999. And from the beginning, Gourmet Navigator has been based on the so-called "Web 2.0" business model which aims to provide consumers with free information over the Internet. We intend to develop an SNS for highly active users, rather than for the general public, who have been the target of most businesses.
- We have organized lectures to help elderly and disabled people learn how to use IT. During the lectures, we use Gourmet Navigator to show them handy uses of mobile phones. It would be more helpful if the service included restaurants that have a menu tailored to the elderly or restaurants that have disabled access facilities.
- If it allows a fine-tuned search, a search for restaurants that, for example, are accessible to people using wheelchairs, parents with children or people with their pets, and that practice the concept of "local production for local consumption" by using locally produced ingredients, small businesses will participate in Gourmet Navigator and may be able to develop an edge.
- Senior Gourmet Navigator, for people over 50 years old, is in place. The web site uses large

fonts and provides health-related information, including information about lifestyle-related diseases. Also in service is Baby Navigator, which parents can use to find baby-friendly restaurants. The service provides educational dietary information.

<Presentation by Mr. Nagayoshi>

Mr. Nagayoshi made a presentation based on Reference 2-3, which was followed by a question and answer session.

[Questions and Answers]

- The main contributors to the NPOs that were started up after the Great Hanshin Earthquake were Kobe-city and large enterprises. However, the large enterprises could not obtain any benefit from their involvement and they gradually left the NPOs. Meanwhile, local SMEs, who thought that their future depended on the revitalization of industry within their region, continued to participate in NPO activities, which helped the NPOs to survive. The government should try to understand the business of local enterprises and provide support mainly to them.
- Presidents or top management from SMEs participate in discussions hoping that they can use their influence for the future benefit of their companies. On the other hand, representatives from large enterprises are regional departmental or sectional managers. Because they attend the meetings to socialize, in-depth discussions rarely take place. The success of an NPO also depends on individuals, that is, whether the NPO's members enjoy such activities.

<Introduction of successful case by Mayor Kasamatsu of Kamikatsu-cho, based on Reference 2-4, which as followed by a question and answer session.>

[Questions and Answers]

- The success of this model depends on how much expertise has been accumulated, such as information exchanged between Irodori K.K. and farmers or on maintaining product quality. Although many entities and people have visited our town to see what we have done, no one has successfully replicated our initiative.
- Last year, we established an organization called the Most Beautiful Villages in Japan, which was based on a French program. To qualify for membership villages must have a population of less than 10,000, two or more unique characteristics such as landscape, environment or culture, and must be implementing programs to take advantage of such resources. The organization is

keeping in close contact with member municipalities, and expects to achieve results in the coming years.