An Amiga App Store

It's been an exciting summer so far. The weather, specifically a hail-producing storm, hasn't been kind to our cars, or the trees in the back yard. If that wasn't enough, Saturday a deer came out of nowhere and bounced off the front of the house, knocking out a storm window (It's worth noting that I've never seen any deer in the local area previously in the near-forty years I've been alive.) I feel there's some kind of message or omen to be found here, but damned if I can tell what it is.

For once there actually has been some news in the Amiga area of things. For this month's meeting I will be demonstrating a few games designed to run in HTML5, which run in the OWB web browser on MorphOS. They may work in OWB for Amiga OS4 or AROS as well, but I'm not currently able to test them. Perhaps the highest-profile game available to play in this format (and for free) is iPhone juggernaut Angry Birds. I was able to get it running on OWB on my Pegasos, albeit without audio, and kinda slow (it's slow on my Linux laptop too). It is nice to have one more of those "big name" games available to play, even if it's through the abstraction of a web browser window.

Finally on this month's news parade, our friend Bill Panagouleas of DiscreetFX is working to go live with the web site "Project Metropolis," which tries to bring the "app store" model of software sales and distribution to the Amiga and Amiga-style systems. There's not much to see yet (though I have been asked to put together a mascot for the site), but at least there's some potential here. Looking on the optimistic side, something like this could conceivably improve the fortunes of the Amiga software market. It offers a central hub for customers to (hopefully conveniently) find and purchase the software they want, and offers programmers a means to sell and distribute their software, trading a small percentage for (again hopefully) a convenient sales venue and a greater customer base than going it alone. In a best case scenario, there might be more incentive to make more elaborate software comparable to the good old days. Even without the ideal situation, it should eventually become easier to get a wider variety of commercial Amiga-related software from a central point. I look forward to seeing where it goes, and respect DiscreetFX for putting forth the effort and investment.

…by Eric Schwartz
from the AmiTech Gazette
June 2011

Monopoly Protection Bill

In North Carolina, a new law severely restricts the ability of communities to build their own broadband networks. Pushed through the North Carolina legislature by Internet providers Time Warner and CenturyLink, the bill allows existing community networks to continue but makes it illegal for them to expand into new territory.

Brian Bowman is the public affairs manager for the city of Wilson, N.C. Wilson has a successful community fiber optic network called Greenlight, which now serves 6,000 residents and local businesses.

Brian Bowman: Our current members don't have to worry about losing any services, we'll continue to provide them. However we've had quite a few folks from outside Wilson County who have asked about possible partnerships with Wilson. You know, just some way to try to get that infrastructure to them because we're the only ones in this part of the state who have an all-fiber network. That can't happen now. We're pretty much landlocked within our county.

This was the fourth attempt by cable lobbyists to protect their turf by outlawing newer, faster, cheaper networks.

Brian Bowman: There were a lot of folks calling this the "Monopoly Protection Bill" because essentially what it's going to do, the effect is gonna be that a lot of communities in North Carolina, in fact most communities in North Carolina will not have a choice now. They'll be stuck with cable, if they get it, or DSL — if they can get it. Some folks may be stuck with dialup and satellite for the foreseeable future.

Gov. Bev Purdue did not veto the bill but made it clear that she was not in favor of it. She asked the legislature to revisit the bill to give communities more options.

Brian Bowman: We do know that the cable companies' lobbyists are very close to a lot of the

lawmakers in Raleigh, and they're not going to stop. I imagine that next year they'll come up with a bill that would try to go even deeper into local broadband networks in North Carolina. So I doubt this is over yet. I would be surprised if they'd be willing to give any ground.

Joel Kelsey, policy analyst for Free Press, says that the North Carolina law is at odds with the federal stance on community broadband. A bipartisan coalition of senators introduced federal legislation to protect community broadband efforts a few years ago, and the National Broadband Plan calls for that protection as well.

Joel Kelsey: I think it is time for the federal government to revisit this question and come in and protect the communities in North Carolina from this ill-founded and corporate-funded legislation…because we know one thing — and that's that the private companies aren't going to go there any time soon.

…Media Minutes for May 27, 2011 Producers: Stevie Converse, Candace Clement, Megan Tady

Broadband at 1 gigabit/second

A residential broadband provider in Sonoma County, California, is about to blow the top off broadband service

business models and offer a fiber-to-the-home 1 gigabit per second connection that includes two phone lines with unlimited long-distance calling for only $69.95 a month.

How fast is 1 gibabit per second? A full-length DVD can be downloaded in seconds. You can tune into crystal clear HD TV channels with enough bandwidth left over to download and play music, surf the Web, get X-rays from your doctor and have a teleconference for work — all at the same time.

Sonic has its own facilities-based network that offers voice and broadband. And when Sonic begins to roll out its own new fiber network, which is much faster than copper, the price for its voice and data packages will remain the same. Dane Jasper, Sonic's CEO, says that, as a competitor in the broadband market, he has to think differently and cater to consumer needs.

Dane Jasper: We sort of re-thought the business model and tried to determine what is an exciting and aggressive broadband product — be it on copper or fiber.

With its copper wire connections, Sonic created a popular untiered, uncapped and unlimited data and voice service with a choice of one or two phone lines.

Broadband packages through incumbent AT&T are priced according to broadband speed. But speed isn't expensive once you have the connection.

Dane Jasper: Someone in one household might be paying $40 and getting a 6 megabit connection, and next door somebody paying $10 less is getting one quarter the speed. And that is not rational. The technology and cost basis for that is not rational. That is market segmentation. The goal there is to get the consumer to open their wallet wider by artificially limiting what is being delivered. And where your cost of goods sold is very low — in other words, bandwidth is super cheap — the creation of that slowdown to get people to spend more money, that market segmentation is rational when you're an incumbent operator who controls the majority of the market.

Sonic will put fiber directly into 60 homes in the city of Sebastapol. An additional 640 homes are slated to join the project by the end of the year. If the project is successful in growing Sonic's market share, expansion will continue. So far, so good. Sonic has skyrocketed, it now boasts a staff of 100, and the company is hiring to keep up with the demand.

…Media Minutes for June 17, 2011 Producers: Stevie Converse, Candace Clement

July Calendar

July 11 — Amiga-By-The-Loop Chapter
    7:30 PM — Main Grand Prairie Library
    901 Conover Drive, Grand Prairie

July 11 — Board of Director's Meeting
    Approximately 9:15 PM — Location TBD

July 25 — Newsletter Deadline — 7:00 AM

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