SCRL Members:

Many of you received an email from a computer and network consultant asking SCRL to have an "Open Meeting about a Closed Network." I would like to make several points about the email:

1. The network consultant is not a member of SCRL nor did he write on behalf of SCRL or with SCRL blessing.
2. SCRL did not give the consultant any email addresses.
3. SCRL has been working with Google to understand the truth of any issues that consultant raised and to resolve any actual issues.
4. Google is in the process of preparing a response to the sequence of emails sent by that consultant. We anticipate that response from Google should be sent in the near future.
5. We believe that the only potential real issue is related to repairs and/or replacement of the Google Network Box if the box should happen to fail unrecoverably. The Google Network Box includes all of the functions of your current router (e.g. the Cisco router provided by Google), but also includes additional capabilities that will allow Google to provide us with additional functionality in the future. The consultant's basic point, once one gets past the rhetoric, is that if the Google Network Box happens to fail on a Friday night, Google might not be able to provide a replacement until Monday or Tuesday of the following week, leaving the SCRL member without Google network access during the weekend. But Google will have 24/7 telephone support that should assist with most difficulties. In particular, Google assures me that all the issues Google has seen to date with the Google Network Box have been fixed with a power cycle of the Network Box (that is, turning it off for a short time and turning it back on.) The 24/7 telephone support can ask the customer to power cycle their Network Box, thus quickly and easily resolving most Network Box failures.
6. The consultant suggests that a person without Google but having a Comcast or AT&T contract, in the event of router failure on Friday night, could go to Fry's over the weekend and buy a new router or hire a network consultant to handle the problem. This would restore the Internet connection before Monday, although at a significant cost. However, this process would actually take more time and would be more costly than contacting the 24/7 telephone support provided by Google.
7. There is a small residual risk. If the Google Network Box were to fail unrecoverably -- that is, to fail in a way that could not be fixed with a simple power cycle -- and that event happened on a Friday night, then the customer might not have network service for the weekend. However, Google is working with SCRL on a system to deal with the small residual risk of Network Box failure, in order to find more complete solutions. That process is not yet complete.
8. Google believes that the new equipment is an upgrade from the old equipment they provided; it will give stronger wireless connections over a larger area of the home. It is the same Network Box as they have deployed commercially in Kansas.
City.

9. Google will be collecting usage data, but their privacy policy precludes their using that information in any way that would identify individuals. In particular, the confidentiality and the collection of data is handled the same in the new contract as in the original contract that everyone already signed.

10. In fact, there is virtually no difference between the original contract everyone signed and the new one. The only significant difference is the ownership of the Google Network Box. In theory, everyone owns their Cisco router -- Google changed the agreement to Google owning the Network Box; that way Google pays the cost of the Network Box, not you.

11. The only sense in which the network will be "closed" is that Google will own the Google Network Box; currently you own the router that Google supplied to you or that you purchased. You will be able to connect anything to the network box that you currently can connect to your existing router. You can make these connections directly or through network switches or additional access points exactly as you can now with the current system.

12. SCRL has been working with Google. The consultant has not been privy to any of the discussions SCRL has been having with Google.

13. Google has agreed to continue providing network service (for some still not-determined future time) at no cost to SCRL members for those SCRL members who sign the new service agreement. Those that do not want to sign the agreement always have the option of terminating their use of the Google network and entering a commercial contract with Comcast, AT&T, or other network providers.

14. Google has informed me that once SCRL is on the same system as is Kansas City, Google has some new features they would like to try out; however, the systems have to be identical for them to include us in the additional features. I do not know the nature of these new features.

15. During the last SCRL Board meeting, the SCRL Board discussed the previous emails sent by that consultant and the information we had received from Google. We concluded that an open meeting as called for by that consultant would not be the appropriate course of action, at least at this time.

As a personal note, I have already signed the agreement. I have no interest in paying a high price to go back to Comcast and get a slower connection than I currently have through Google.

For SCRL members who did not receive an email about signing the new agreement, or who cannot find the original email, please call the Google support number (866-777-7550) or email (fiber-support@google.com) and they can help.

Jim Sweeney