

Community Council

Thursday, March 31, 2016

9:30 a.m. to 12:00 noon CT (8:30 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. MT)

Nebraska Public Service Commission, 1200 N St., Suite 300, Lincoln, NE in the hearing room

Grand Island Public Library, 211 N Washington St. , Grand Island, NE

ESU 13, 1114 Toledo St., Sidney, NE

Norfolk Voc Rehab, 1212 Benjamin Ave., Norfolk, NE

University of Nebraska Kearney, CMCT 250, Kearney, NE

MINUTES

ROLL CALL, NOTICE OF POSTING OF AGENDA, & NOTICE OF NEBRASKA OPEN MEETINGS ACT POSTING

Members Present:

Pam Adams

Jay Anderson

Rod Armstrong

Randy Bretz

Steve Fosselman (at Grand Island Public Library)

Connie Hancock (at ESU 13)

Commissioner Jerry Vap

Holly Woldt

Members Absent: Chris Anderson, Brett Baker, Jessica Chamberlain, Shonna Dorsey, Phil Green, Dave Hahn, Steve Henderson, Jacob Knutson, David Lofdahl, Monica Lueking-Crow, Megan McGown, Joan Modrell

ROLL CALL, NOTICE OF POSTING OF AGENDA, & NOTICE OF NEBRASKA OPEN MEETINGS ACT POSTING

The meeting was called to order by co-chair Rod Armstrong. Seven members were present at time of roll. A quorum was not present. The meeting announcement was posted on the Nebraska Public Meeting website on March 4, 2016 and the NITC website on Feb. 25, 2016. The agenda was posted on March 25, 2016. A copy of the Nebraska Open Meetings Act was available on the wall.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There were no public comments.

UPDATES

Nebraska Broadband Today! The Nebraska Telecommunications Association (NTA) and the Nebraska Broadband Initiative (the University of Nebraska, Nebraska Public Service Commission, NITC Community Council, and AIM) are partnering to put on a statewide broadband conference on May 24, 2016 at the Cornhusker Marriott in Lincoln. Members were sent a link to the agenda and registration site. Ms. Byers thanked the NTA for their leadership and support in organizing the conference. Members of the NTA and Nebraska Broadband Initiative will staff a solutions center to answer questions and share resources.

Lincoln Skills Gap Report. A shortage of skilled IT workers has been identified as an issue by the Community Council and many other groups working in Nebraska. A recent report from the Department of Labor includes information on the skills gap in Lincoln. The report indicates that there are 220 annual net openings for computer and mathematical occupations and 148 annual college or community college graduates. Rod Armstrong said that he has heard that the shortage of IT workers is even greater than the study indicates.

Funding Sources for Broadband. Connie Hancock shared information on a list of funding resources for broadband that she is compiling for the Nebraska Broadband Initiative. The USDA has already provided information. The Cool and Connected Program is a USDA pilot program to help communities develop strategies for using broadband service to promote, sustainable community development. Ms. Hancock worked with other members of the Sidney community to submit a letter of interest. Other Nebraska communities may also have applied. The Public Service will be provide additional information on their programs to be included in the list of funding sources. The list will be made available at the Nebraska Broadband Today! conference.

MarkeTECH Conference. Rod Armstrong shared information on the MarkeTECH Conference which will be held April 26-27 at the Holiday Inn Convention Center in Kearney.

Nebraska Universal Service Fund and Nebraska Internet Enhancement Fund. Commissioner Vap and Gene Hand shared information on the Nebraska Universal Service Fund (NUSF) and the Nebraska Internet Enhancement Fund (NIEF). In January the Nebraska Public Service Commission allocated \$4 million for wireless broadband infrastructure projects and \$500,000 for Broadband Availability and Adoption Grants. Applications are due March 31, 2016. Up to \$150,000 will likely be available later this year through the Nebraska Internet Enhancement Fund.

Gene Hand also gave an update on a recent FCC order seeking reform of the Federal Universal Service Fund. This change will allow support for rate-of-return carriers for the infrastructure necessary to connect the consumer (last mile facilities) when broadband is the only service provided at that location. Rate of return carriers are generally located in rural areas and tend to serve small populations with low density. The FCC is expected to issue an additional order on March 31, 2016 modernizing the Lifeline program to support stand-alone broadband as well as bundled voice and data service packages.

ACTION ITEMS TO SUPPORT THE STATEWIDE TECHNOLOGY PLAN

Ms. Byers discussed the Community Council's action item to develop case studies and highlight success stories. Descriptions of a couple of projects have been developed. The projects already highlighted include:

- Rural Nebraska Healthcare Network Broadband Fiber Network
- Interface: The Web School
- Nebraska 4-H FIRST Lego League
- Lincoln City Libraries bandwidth project

The group identified other projects which could be highlighted:

- Lincoln City Libraries will be putting in a Maker Space in the basement of Bennet Martin Public Library.

- The library in Sidney is also developing a Maker Space.
- The Library Commission is working on a proposal with Extension to develop portable Maker Spaces.
- UNL Extension's youth entrepreneurship initiative is developing maker kits.
- Schuyler is addressing the need for public access broadband by converting a vacant building into a public access site.
- Beatrice Public Library is working with the school district on improving Internet access.
- Glenwood Telephone is putting in Fiber to the Premise to all customers in the Keystone and Arthur exchanges. The project is funded in part by the Nebraska Universal Service Fund.
- Central Community College has put together a fiber network to connect their campuses and develop a video education network.
- Pioneer Consortium, a consortium of 24 libraries, is partnering on a statewide Koha open source union catalog.
- A group in Lincoln is looking at preparing citizens for Gigabit service.
- Network Nebraska continues to add members and decrease costs.
- Recent legislation and legislative resolutions related to broadband could be highlighted.

The group discussed a strategy for disseminating these success stories. Ms. Byers suggested a bi-monthly newsletter. Members were supportive. Ms. Byers asked for volunteers to contribute. Holly Woldt, Randy Bretz, Connie Hancock, Charlotte Narjes, and Jay Anderson volunteered.

The Community Council will also develop a social media strategy. Ms. Byers asked for volunteers to serve on a work group to address this. Connie Hancock, Jay Anderson, and Pam Adams volunteered. Shonna Dorsey may also be interested.

Education Council Broadband-Related Action Items: Equitable Access for Students/Network Nebraska Participation by Other Entities. Tom Rolfes led a discussion on how members could support the Education Council's broadband-related initiatives. Two representatives of the Education Council, Burke Brown and Andy Boell, also participated in the discussion. Mr. Rolfes shared information on Nebraska's involvement in Internet2's Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS0) grant. Tom Rolfes and Holly Woldt will be traveling to Chicago for a meeting on May 19 to begin planning the development of a broadband assessment toolkit which will be piloted with at least 30 rural and tribal libraries across 5-7 states. Nebraska was chosen to participate because of the state's high number of very small libraries.

Mr. Rolfes also discussed Network Nebraska's potential to connect libraries in Nebraska. Earlier this month, Network Nebraska has revised its criteria for participation which recognizes and accommodates lower bandwidth entities, potential non-profit educational content providers, and those education entities that connect to Network Nebraska through other participants. A subgroup of Community and Education Council members will meet at 1:00 to continue the discussion.

RESIDENTIAL INTERNET ACCESS COST IN NEBRASKA

Tim Obermeier, a professor at the University of Nebraska at Kearney, spoke to the group about his research on residential Internet access cost in Nebraska. The study was designed to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the average cost per Mbps for residential Internet access in Nebraska?
2. What is the average cost per Mbps for residential internet access for each classification of Nebraska municipality?
3. What is the average cost per Mbps for digital subscriber line, terrestrial wireless, fiber, and cable delivery methods of residential internet access in Nebraska?
4. What is the average cost per Mbps for residential broadband Internet access in Nebraska?

Nebraska has five city classes. Omaha is the only city of the metropolitan class and Lincoln is the only city of the primary class. Thirty cities were randomly selected from each of three remaining city classes in Nebraska as established by statute. ISPs were identified for each city selected, and information on price and data rates was collected in the late fall of 2014 through the spring of 2015. The study did not look at business class, bundles or special contracts.

Findings and observations included:

- Residents of the Metropolitan class (Omaha) experienced on average the lowest Internet access cost per Mbps.
- Residents of First Class, Second Class, and Village combined, pay on average 8.5% more than residents of Primary and Metropolitan combined.
- Residents with 4Mbps/1Mbps broadband experience lower cost per Mbps than other rates of access.
- Residents of the Primary class (Lincoln) experience the lowest rates for 4Mbps/1Mbps broadband access.
- Residents of First Class, Second Class, and Village combined, pay on average 63% more than residents of Primary and Metropolitan classes combined for 4Mbps/1Mbps broadband access.
- For 4Mbps/1Mbps DSL service: Residents of First Class, Second Class, and Village combined, pay on average 170% more than residents of Primary and Metropolitan classes combined for 4Mbps/1Mbps broadband access.
- Nebraska residents across all communities have very limited access to 25Mbps/3Mbps service.

Adjournment. The meeting was adjourned.