

COMMUNITY COUNCIL
Nebraska Information Technology Commission
Wednesday, Oct. 30, 2019 1:30 P.M. CT – 4:00 P.M. CT
Nebraska Public Service Commission
1200 N St, Suite 300, Lincoln, Nebraska
MINUTES

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

Members Present: Pam Adams, Jay Anderson, Rod Armstrong, Brett Baker, Connie Hancock, Allison Hatch for Jacob Knutson, Johnathan Hladik, Mary Ridder, and Sam Shaw for Holly Woldt

Members Absent: Chris Anderson, Randy Bretz , Phil Green, Tim Lindahl, David Lofdahl, and Megan McGown

Members Using Video/Phone (Public Participation): Jessica Chamberlain, Shonna Dorsey, and Steve Fosselman

The meeting was called to order by co-chair Rod Armstrong at 1:35. Nine members were present, making a quorum. The meeting announcement was posted on the NITC and Nebraska Public Meeting websites on Oct. 16, 2019. The agenda was posted on the NITC website on Oct. 23, 2019. A copy of the Nebraska Open Meetings Act was on the wall.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

APPROVAL OF NOVEMBER 14, 2018 MINUTES

Jay Anderson made a motion to approve the November 14, 2018 minutes. Johnathan Hladik seconded the motion.

Roll call vote: Adams-Yes, C. Anderson-Yes, J, Armstrong-Yes, Baker-Yes, Hancock-Yes, Hladik-Yes, Hatch-Abstained. Ridder-Abstained, Shaw-Abstained. Results: Yes-6, No-0, Abstained-3. Motion carried.

NEW MEMBER NOMINATION*

Connie Hancock made a motion to approve the nomination of Allison Hatch. Pam Adams seconded the motion.

Roll call vote: Adams-Yes, C. Anderson-Yes, J, Armstrong-Yes, Baker-Yes, Hancock-Yes, Hladik-Yes, Hatch-Abstained. Ridder-Yes, Shaw-Abstained. Results: Yes-7, No-0, Abstained-2. Motion carried.

RURAL BBROADBAND TASK FORCE UPDATES

Several members and alternates of the Community Council have been involved with the Rural Broadband Task Force. Commissioner Mary Ridder and Tim Lindahl are task force members. Allison Hatch represented the Nebraska Department of Economic Development at one meeting. Cullen Robbins, Anne

Byers, and Tom Rolfes have provided staff support to the task force. The task force has had 40 task force and subcommittee meetings and has invited over 50 speakers to participate. Commissioner Ridder commented felt that the task force had great dynamics and provided opportunities for discussion. The task force approved a draft report on Oct. 18. The final report is due on Friday, November 1.

Broadband Mapping—Cullen Robbins. The Broadband Data Subcommittee examined what data on broadband availability is currently available, what data is needed, and how to get the data that is needed but not available. During this time, the FCC issued an order initiating changes to the broadband data collection process. Federal legislation was also introduced which would improve broadband mapping. The task force recommended leveraging federal efforts to improve broadband mapping.

Alternative Providers and Technologies—Anne Byers. Anne Byers said that the Broadband Technologies Subcommittee found that fixed wireless technologies were now providing services of 100 Mbps down/10 Mbps up or better in some areas. Low Earth orbit satellite service may also be available in Nebraska by mid-2020. Jay Anderson asked if anyone from Stealth Broadband had talked to the task force. Ms. Byers replied that they had not.

NUSF and Reverse Auction—Mary Ridder. In April, the Nebraska Public Service Commission implemented a new collections method based on connections for the Nebraska Universal Service Fund. The new connections-based methodology has resulted in an additional \$11 million being collected this year. Of the additional \$11 million in funding, \$4.5 million will be allocated to support price cap carriers, \$4.5 will be allocated to support rate of return (rural) carriers, and \$2 million will be allocated to support mobile wireless carriers.

The Public Service Commission is transitioning the fund to a more grant-like system where companies need to build before they can collect funds. A large fiber to the premise project in Cherry County has been funded through the program. Several fixed wireless implementations by Windstream have also been approved.

The Nebraska Public Service Commission has also opened up a docket examining the establishment of a state-run reverse auction. The PSC is exploring how community support and needs can be considered in the process. The Rural Broadband Task Force recommendations support the efforts of the Public Service Commission to modernize the fund and to examine a reverse auction.

Public-Private Partnerships and Broadband Planning—Anne Byers. Task force recommendations include encouraging local and regional broadband planning. The task force also recommended exploring ways to make it easier for public entities to lease dark fiber. Local governments should also review their rights of way and permitting processes so that they are not unreasonably burdensome on telecommunications providers.

Digital Inclusion, the Homework Gap and Leveraging Funding—Tom Rolfes. The Homework Gap Subcommittee partnered with the NITC Education Council and the Nebraska Department of Education on a survey of Nebraska teachers about how the homework gap is impacting the learning environment. Over 30% of teachers responded to the survey.

Most libraries provide internet access. However, most small, rural libraries have internet service at speeds below what the FCC defines as broadband. Libraries are also eligible for E-Rate support, but only approximately 25% of Nebraska libraries apply for E-Rate support. The Nebraska Library Commission has been working to improve library participation in the E-rate program and to improve library broadband. Several recommendations of the rural broadband task force focused on improving library participation in the E-Rate program.

Nebraska Public Service Commission and NUSF Updates—Mary Ridder

The updates on the Nebraska Public Service Commission were included in the Rural Broadband Task Force update.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT UPDATES

Metropolitan Community College Code School and Mutual of Omaha Collaboration—Shonna Dorsey. Mutual of Omaha partnered with Metropolitan Community College Code School on a program to upskill employees with an IT aptitude to applications developer positions while retaining their existing employment. The nine-month training program began in September 2019 and will end in May 2020. In March 2020, participants will begin switching over to IT. They will have a 6 to 12 month apprenticeship and will then transition to junior applications developer positions. Mutual of Omaha had 54 applicants and selected five participants. Feedback has been positive.

Nebraska Department of Economic Development—Allison Hatch. Ms. Hatch said that work force and housing are the top issues for most Nebraska communities. Ms. Hatch works with the Nebraska Department of Labor and Nebraska Department of Education on a number of workforce development initiatives. A new website, the Good Life is Calling (<https://thegoodlifeiscalling.com/>) shares stories of individuals who moved to Nebraska for the quality of life and provides information about moving to Nebraska. Good Life Ambassadors share information on social media.

OTHER UPDATES

Rural Community Prosperity Initiative—Connie Hancock. The goal of the Rural Community Prosperity Working Group is to create a comprehensive strategic framework to rural community prosperity which reinforces the role of the University of Nebraska as a key resource. The framework will be presented to Vice President/Vice Chancellor Mike Boehm by Nov. 15, 2019. Ms. Hancock said that the number of field staff will likely increase from five or six to 12. The Small Business Development Center, Nebraska Extension, RFI and others are developing Nebraska SourceLink (<https://nebraska.edu/sourcelink>) to create web-based resources for community economic development.

Nebraska Library Commission—Sam Shaw. The discussion of the Rural Broadband Task Force's homework gap findings and recommendations included many of the updates from the Nebraska Library Commission. As part of the Library Commission's efforts to address the homework gap and promote E-Rate participation, Sam Shaw has developed a series of blogs and videos. Links to two blogs and videos are below:

- Homework Gap Blog and Video <http://nlcblogs.nebraska.gov/nlcblog/2019/10/16/the-homework-gap/>
- E-Rate Success Story Blog and Video <http://nlcblogs.nebraska.gov/nlcblog/2019/10/07/e-rate-story>

COMMUNITY COUNCIL ACTION ITEMS*

Anne Byers distributed a broadband fact sheet for Custer County. Fact sheets for 14 counties were developed and shared at a meeting of the Central Nebraska Economic Development District in October. Jay Anderson said that the NACO conference will be held in December in Kearney. NACO might be interested in the fact sheets. Johnathan Hladik asked for a fact sheet for Burt County.

The Community Council will meet prior to the March NITC meeting to discuss action items. Members were encouraged to come to the meeting with ideas for action items. Ms. Byers and Ms. Hancock will also explore possible partnerships between the Community Council and the Rural Community Prosperity Initiative.

ADJOURNMENT

With no other business, the chair adjourned the meeting at 3:37 p.m.

Meeting minutes were prepared by Lori Lopez Urdiales and Anne Byers.