

**Nebraska Information Technology Commission  
Community Council  
Friday, May 29, 2020  
9:30 A.M. CT – 11:00 A.M. CT  
Zoom Videoconferencing**

**MINUTES**

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

**Members Present:** Pam Adams, Chris Anderson, Jay Anderson, Rod Armstrong, Randy Bretz, Jessica Chamberlain, Steve Fosselman, Connie Hancock, Johnathan Hladik, Nichole Reiner for Allison Hatch, Tim Lindahl, Judy Petersen, Mary Ridder, Danny Rockhill, Mehmet Can Vuran, Holly Woldt and David Young.

**Members Absent:** Shonna Dorsey and Megan McGown

The meeting was called to order by co-chair Rod Armstrong at 9:30 a.m. Seventeen members were present, making a quorum. Meeting notices were posted on the Public Meeting and NITC websites on May 22, 2020. The agenda was posted on the NITC Website on May 22, 2020. A copy of the Nebraska Open Meetings Act was available at [https://nitc.nebraska.gov/documents/statutes/NebraskaOpenMeetingsAct\\_current.pdf](https://nitc.nebraska.gov/documents/statutes/NebraskaOpenMeetingsAct_current.pdf).

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

There was no public comment.

**APPROVAL OF FEBRUARY 19, 2020 MINUTES**

Johnathan Hladik made a motion to approve the February 19, 2020 minutes. Pam Adams seconded the motion.

**Roll call vote: Adams-Yes, C. Anderson-Yes, J. Anderson-Yes, Armstrong-Yes, Bretz-Yes, Chamberlain-Yes, Fosselman-Yes, Hancock-Yes, Hladik-Yes, Reiner-Yes, Lindahl-Yes, Petersen-Yes, Ridder-Yes, Rockhill-Yes, Vuran-Abstaining, Woldt-Yes, Young-Abstaining. Results: Yes-15,, No-0, Abstaining-2. Motion carried.**

**INTRODCUCTIONS AND MEMBERSHIP**

Nichole Reiner, chief strategist for the Nebraska Department of Economic Development, has been nominated to represent the Nebraska Department of Economic Development. She introduced herself to members and members also introduced themselves.

Jay Anderson made a motion to approve the nomination of Nichole Reiner. Tim Lindahl seconded the motion.

**Roll call vote: Adams-Yes, C. Anderson-Yes, J. Anderson-Yes, Armstrong-Yes, Bretz-Yes, Chamberlain-Yes, Fosselman-Yes, Hancock-Yes, Hladik-Yes, Reiner-Yes, Lindahl-Yes, Petersen-Yes, Ridder-Yes, Rockhill-Yes, Vuran-Yes, Woldt-Yes, Young-Yes. Results: Yes-17, No-0, Abstained-0. Motion carried.**

## Updates

**Nebraska Department of Economic Development.** Nichole Reiner shared information on a \$40 million broadband grant program announced by Governor Ricketts. The grant program is funded by the CARES Act and will provide funding to improve broadband so residents can work at home, participate in online learning and access health care through telehealth. More details will be available at a later date.

Chris Anderson asked about community eligibility and shared his experience with having a provider say that they were planning to build out infrastructure in the community to provide broadband, but not following through. Their promise to build out discourages other providers from offering service.

**Nebraska Public Service Commission (PSC).** Commissioner Ridder and Cullen Robbins gave the following updates:

- The PSC approved an E-Rate Special Construction Matching Program for schools and libraries which do not have fiber.
- The PSC also approved a \$1 million broadband adoption program to reimburse telecommunications carriers for providing service to low-income families as a part of the response to the COVID-19 emergency.
- The docket to explore implementing a reverse auction of Nebraska universal service funds is moving forward. Draft rules are in place and a hearing was held in May.
- The PSC is looking at opening a docket to look at modernizing the contribution method for business connections to the Nebraska Universal Service Fund. Residential consumers now pay a \$1.75 per connection surcharge. Businesses still pay a surcharge of 6.95%.
- The FCC has moved back the date of the Rural Digital Opportunity Fund reverse auction by one week.
- Commissioner Ridder toured the Valentine area to view CenturyLink's progress on rebuilding the exchange with fiber.

**Homework Gap and Library Update.** Holly Woldt reported that libraries are excited about the NUSF 117 E-Rate Special Construction Matching Program. Ninety-one libraries have been identified as unserved or underserved. The Nebraska Library Commission is working to prepare libraries for the program, including evaluating what updates may need to be made to the library's network equipment.

The Nebraska Library Commission received \$175,000 in funding from the CARES Act. The funds will be awarded to libraries by July 1.

**AIM Code School.** Rod Armstrong shared that AIM has successfully moved its code school courses online in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Ten students at Omaha South have been participating in the program. Two students were selected for internships as Union Pacific. AIM is also providing custom corporate training to upscale call center employees to programmers. The program is called Callers to Coders.

**Broadband Case Studies.** Anne Byers gave an update on the broadband case studies. Eight case studies showing strategies and models that communities can use to improve broadband availability are being developed. The case studies include Gothenburg, Seward County, Ravenna, Lincoln, Norfolk, Imperial, Paige Wireless, and Lancaster County. Members liked the case studies Jay Anderson suggested Stealth Broadband would also be a good case study.

## **ACTION ITEMS\***

Ms. Byers explained that the NITC is beginning the process of updating the Statewide Technology Plan. Each NITC advisory council is asked to submit one or more action items to be included in the Statewide Technology Plan. The community council approved the following action item in February:

**Work with the Nebraska Department of Economic Development and other stakeholders to explore the development of a collaborative broadband outreach effort.**

**Lead:** NITC Community Council and Nebraska Department of Economic Development

**Timeframe:** 2020-2021

**Funding:** Leveraging existing resources

Anne Byers asked council members to more fully flesh out the above action item. She also suggested including an action item on the case studies:

**Develop a series of case studies illustrating successful strategies and models that communities can use to improve broadband.**

**Lead:** NITC Community Council

**Timeframe:** 2020

**Funding:** Leveraging existing resources

**Targets/Deliverables:**

1. A booklet of at least 8 case studies
2. A marketing/social media plan to share information on the case studies

Judy Peterson suggested reaching out to the directors of the economic development districts because they are the boots on the ground. Charlotte Narjes and Connie Hancock suggested reaching out to the University of Nebraska Community Vitality Educators. Ms. Byers also suggested reaching out to the League of Nebraska Municipalities.

Randy Bretz suggested writing a series of stories focusing on the impact of broadband. He offered to help write articles and asked members for suggestions of people to interview. .

As it was already nearly 11:00, Rod Armstrong suggested that Ms. Byers share a draft of action items with members via e-mail.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

With no other business, the chair adjourned the meeting at 11:00 a.m.

Meeting minutes were prepared Anne Byers.