

**Nebraska Information Technology Commission
Community Council
Monday, March 14, 2022
1:30 P.M. CT
Nebraska Public Service Commission, Hearing Room
1200 N Street, Suite 300
Lincoln, NE 68508**

Zoom videoconferencing was also available.

The meeting was held as a virtual meeting of the Nebraska Information Technology Commission conducted pursuant to Neb. Exec. Order No. 21-02 (<http://govdocs.nebraska.gov/docs/pilot/pubs/eofiles/21-02.pdf>).

MINUTES

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

Members Present: Jay Anderson, Rod Armstrong, Charlotte Narjes for Connie Hancock, Johnathan Hladik, Rick Nelson, Nichole Reiner, Judy Peterson, Mary Ridder, Debora Robertson, Danny Rockhill, Holly Woldt.

Members Absent: Chris Anderson, Randy Bretz, Karen Connell, Meghan McGown, Mehmet Can Vuran.

The meeting was called to order by Rod Armstrong at 1:30 p.m. Seven members were present in person and four were present via Zoom. The chair determined that this meeting would be an official videoconferencing meeting. A quorum was present.

Meeting notices were posted on the Public Meeting and NITC websites on March 4, 2022. The agenda was posted on the NITC website on March 7, 2022. A copy of the Nebraska Open Meetings Act was available on the wall.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

APPROVAL OF April 1, 2021 and October 25, 2021 MINUTES

Judy Petersen made a motion to approve the April 1, 2021 and October 25, 2021 minutes. Mary Ridder seconded the motion.

Roll call vote: J. Anderson-Yes, Armstrong-Yes, Charlotte Narjes for Connie Hancock-Yes, Hladik-Yes, Nelson-Yes, Petersen-Yes, Reiner-Yes, Mary Ridder-Yes, Robertson-Yes, Rockhill-Yes, Woldt-Yes. Results: Yes-11, No-0, Abstained-0. Motion carried.

Membership

Pam Adams has accepted a position with a company based in Iowa and has resigned. David Young is no longer with the City of Lincoln. He is now with NIFA. Rod Armstrong asked Anne Byers to identify nominees to fill these positions.

UPDATES

PSC And Broadband Bridge Program Update. Cullen Robbins reported that the Nebraska Public Service Commission recently awarded \$19.2 million in funding to 61 projects to connect 12,634 locations in the Nebraska Broadband Bridge program's first grant cycle. The PSC has opened a docket seeking comments on adjustments to improve the administration of the Nebraska Broadband Bridge program. A hearing is scheduled on March 22.

Rural Broadband Task Force Update. Anne Byers reported that the Rural Broadband Task Force submitted its 2021 report in late October. The report included findings and recommendations from the task force's Agriculture Subcommittee on the broadband needs of farmers and ranchers in Nebraska.

Federal Broadband Funding. Anne Byers reported that Nebraska is expected to receive more than \$200 million for broadband deployment and broadband-related projects and at least \$7.5 million for digital equity planning and implementation projects from the American Rescue Plan Act and the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act.

- Nebraska is expected to receive \$128.7 million from the American Rescue Plan Act's Capital Projects Fund for broadband deployment, digital equity, or community facilities which enable work, education and health monitoring.
- Nebraska is expected to receive a minimum of \$100 million from the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) Broadband Equity, Access and Deployment (BEAD) Program. In order to receive BEAD implementation funds, states must first develop a broadband plan.
- States can also receive a minimum of \$300,000 through the State Digital Equity Capacity Grant Program Planning Grant program to develop a digital equity plan with the opportunity to apply for a minimum of \$7.2 million in implementation funding over 5 years through the State Digital Equity Capacity Grant program.

A table summarizing federal broadband funding sources and a tentative timeline for distribution of the funds was included in the meeting materials.

Legislative Update. LB 1144 would make adjustments to the Broadband Bridge Program, including reducing the match required for projects in high cost areas to 25%. The committee amendment to LB 1144 inserted amended versions of several other broadband bills. The committee amendment would also authorize the PSC to develop a broadband map and would create a precision ag infrastructure grant program.

Library Updates. Holly Woldt reported that she has been working with several libraries to go through the RFP process to procure a fiber connection using E-Rate Special Construction matching funds. Tom Rolfes has also been working with several libraries to go through the Network Nebraska RFP process. The deadline for applications for the E-Rate Special Construction Fund is March 22. A small number of libraries will likely complete applications. Some librarians reported not having time to go through the process because they were busy with special projects funded by ARPA. Sixteen libraries may be impacted by the first round of Broadband Bridge Grants. Holly Woldt has been contacting libraries in communities receiving grant funding. Judy Petersen asked for more information on the program that she could share with others in her region.

NROC Broadband Event. Judy Petersen gave an update on the March 21 broadband conference. Nearly 200 people have registered so far. Several members indicated that they had registered and were planning to attend. The conference will kick off regional planning efforts by the state's economic development districts.

NEXT STEPS

Since the State of Nebraska will be required to develop a 5-year broadband deployment action plan and a digital inclusion plan in order to receive federal broadband funding through the BEAD program and the

State Digital Equity Capacity Grants program, Anne Byers suggested that the Community Council could help support the expected planning efforts by updating outreach materials and by participating in the broadband deployment and digital equity planning efforts. She has interviewed Doc Winger, Tom Shoemaker and Tonya Mayer for updated case studies or a lessons learned document. She also started an update of a quiz which was included in a 2014 broadband planning workbook. The quiz can be used to start discussions about broadband in a community or region. Jay Anderson, Judy Petersen, Charlotte Narjes and Nichole Reiner volunteered to help revise the quiz. Nichole Reiner shared that her last day with the Department of Economic development will be April 8. She would be willing to help as a private citizen.

Anne Byers said that the NITC will be updating the statewide technology plan including action items by all of the commission's advisory groups. She recommended having the Community Council's action plans focus on developing outreach materials and supporting planning efforts. She also recommended drafting the action plans later after more is known about the administration of the funding.

Judy Petersen made a motion to adjourn. Jay Anderson seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 3:00 p.m. CT.