

**Nebraska Information Technology Commission
Community Council**

Wednesday, December 6, 2023

8:30 A.M. CT

**Nebraska Public Service Commission, Hearing Room
1200 N Street, Suite 300
Lincoln, NE 68508**

Zoom videoconferencing was also available.

MINUTES

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

Members Present: Jay Anderson (Zoom), Rod Armstrong, Rick Nelson (Zoom), Debora Robertson, Randy Bretz (Zoom), Mehmet Can Vuran (Zoom), Carla Kimball for Judy Peterson (Zoom), Jason Tuller (Zoom)

Members Absent: Chris Anderson, Danny Rockhill, David Young

Others Present: Andrew Sherman, Diane Lowe, Carrie Gans

The meeting was called to order by Rod Armstrong at 8:30 a.m. CT. A quorum was not present at the meeting location.

Meeting notices and the agenda were posted on the Public Meeting and NITC websites on December 1, 2023. A copy of the Nebraska Open Meetings Act was available on the wall.

Minutes from the September 26, 2022 meeting were not available.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

REVIEW AND COMMENTS ON DRAFT NEBRASKA DIGITAL OPPORTUNITIES PLAN

Anne Byers briefly discussed the purpose of the Draft Nebraska Digital Opportunities Plan and then invited members to share their comments.

Jay Anderson commented that connecting every unserved location will require millions of dollars in funding. Diane Lowe from the Nebraska Broadband Office provided some information on the BEAD grant. Nebraska will receive \$405 million in funding to connect all unserved locations in Nebraska. In addition, other sources of funding for broadband deployment are available. Carrie Gans from the Nebraska Public Service Commission shared information on the programs administered by the Public Service Commission. Approximately \$20 million in Nebraska Broadband Bridge grants will be awarded in January. An additional round of the Capital Projects Broadband Bridge Program will open later next year. A reverse auction for certain unserved areas just launched.

Can Vuran commented that providers such as Starlink can play a role in connecting rural areas which need connectivity to connect not just farms, but also animals, crop and soil moisture sensors and other devices. Many federal programs are not technology neutral and favor fiber. Carrie Gans said that PSC programs are technology neutral but require a build out speed of 100 Mbps down and 100 Mbps up.

Carrie Gans also shared information on the Precision Agriculture Infrastructure Grant (PRO-AG) Program. The legislature appropriated \$1 million this year and \$1 million next year for this grant program for farm connectivity and precision ag devices.

Anne Byers encouraged members and guests to submit written comments on the draft plan.

UPDATES

Anne Byers shared that she is retiring on March 1.

FUTURE OF THE COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Anne Byers explained that implementing the Nebraska Digital Opportunities Plan will require ongoing outreach and coordination. A Digital Opportunities Advisory Group would help the State of Nebraska meet those requirements. The tentative plan is to disband the Community and eHealth Councils and form a new advisory group. A representative of the Nebraska Broadband Office could chair or co-chair the advisory group. The NITC could provide staff support. This would help the Nebraska Broadband Office because their staff will be busy implementing the BEAD grant and State Digital Equity Capacity Grant. Rod Armstrong commented that the new advisory group would be more actively be involved. This would be more in line with the original vision of the NITC.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:30 a.m.