

## **RURAL BROADBAND TASK FORCE**

Monday, December 10, 2018, 9:30 a.m. to Noon CT  
Varner Hall, Lower Level, Board Room  
3835 Holdrege Street, Lincoln, Nebraska

### **MINUTES**

#### **MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Ed Toner, Chair, Nebraska Information Technology Commission  
Mary Ridder, Chair, Nebraska Public Service Commission  
Senator Curt Friesen, District 34, Chair, Transportation and Telecommunications Committee, Nebraska Legislature  
Senator Bruce Bostelman, District 23, Nebraska Legislature  
Dave Rippe, Director, Nebraska Department of Economic Development  
Steve Wellman, Director, Nebraska Department of Agriculture  
Zachary Hunnicutt, Farmer, Hunnicutt Farms  
Isaiah Graham, Vice-President, Homestead Bank  
Tom Shoemaker, President, Pinpoint Communications  
Daniel Spray, Owner, Precision Technology  
Timothy Lindahl, CEO/General Manager, Wheat Belt Public Power District  
Anna Turman, CEO, Chadron Community Hospital & Health Services (Video)  
Andrew Buker, Executive Director of Infrastructure Services, University of Nebraska  
Ron Cone, Director of Network Information Services, ESU 10

#### **OPENING BUSINESS**

Ed Toner, Office of the Chief Information Officer

Mr. Toner called the meeting to order at 9:40 a.m. Roll call was taken. There were 12 voting and two non-voting members present. A quorum existed to conduct official business. The meeting announcement was posted on the Nebraska Public Meeting website on September 26, 2018 and on the Rural Broadband Task Force website on September 28, 2018. The agenda was posted on the Rural Broadband Task Force website on December 3, 2018. The Open Meetings Act was posted on the south wall.

#### **APPROVAL OF THE NOVEMBER 7, 2018 MINUTES\***

**Mr. Spray moved to approve the November 7, 2018 meeting minutes as presented. Mr. Graham seconded. Roll call vote: Toner-Yes, Ridder-Yes, Rippe-Yes, Wellman-Yes, Hunnicutt-Yes, Graham-Yes, Shoemaker-Yes, Spray-Yes, Lindahl-Yes, Turman-Yes, Buker-Yes, and Cone-Yes. Results: Yes-12, No-0 and Abstained-0. Motion carried.**

#### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Mr. Toner informed the group that Microsoft submitted written comments which will be sent to task force members. Mr. Toner invited public comment.

Rod Wagner, director of the Nebraska Library Commission, provided information on broadband availability in libraries in communities with fewer than 2,500 people. Most have service of less than 10 Mbps down. He said that Nebraska public libraries, as community anchor institutions, could be an even more vital resource if assistance in getting faster broadband was provided. The Nebraska Library Commission is partnering with the Office of the CIO on a \$25,000 demonstration grant from the Institute for Museum and Library Services (IMLS). The grant provided for fixed wireless connections from the schools to the libraries in the towns of Bancroft, Bayard, Genoa, Imperial, Verdigre, and Wymore to augment their existing internet.

Holly Woldt, Library Technology Specialist at the Nebraska Library Commission, shared a map showing the location of unserved and underserved libraries. Tom Shoemaker commented that faster broadband is

available in many of the communities shown on the map. Ms. Woldt responded that cost is an issue for many libraries. Ron Cone asked if libraries are applying for E-rate funding. Ms. Woldt said that many libraries in Nebraska do not apply for E-rate because of limited staff time and because the process can be daunting.

Ted Osborn, Senior Vice President of Strategy and Regulatory Affairs for NextLink, shared that AMG Technology Investment Group/NextLink was named a provisional Connect America Fund (CAF) II reverse auction winner to provide broadband of 100 Mbps down and 20 Mbps up to 8,768 homes in Nebraska. Approval from the FCC is expected in the first quarter of 2019. NextLink will use fixed wireless to provide service to areas in Nebraska.

#### **PANEL DISCUSSION: PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS**

**Panelists:** *Tom Shoemaker, Pinpoint Communications; Brian Thompson, Consolidated Telephone; Tim Lindahl, Wheat Belt Public Power District; and Kim Christiansen, Nebraska Rural Electric Association*

Panelists shared examples of public-private broadband partnerships. They also discussed the benefits and challenges of public-private partnerships as well as how the state and local entities can encourage public-private partnerships. The panelists were in consensus that one partnership model will not fit all localities. Right of way issues were cited as one barrier. The requirements for public entities to lease dark fiber were also mentioned as a potential barrier. Panelists answered questions from task force members. Mr. Toner thanked panelists for their presentations.

Mr. Wellman left the meeting.

#### **FORMATION OF A SUBCOMMITTEE\***

LB 994 charges the task force with examining “alternatives for deployment of broadband services to areas that remain unserved or underserved, such as reverse auction programs, public-private partnerships, funding for competitive deployment, and other measures.” The Task Force discussed establishing a subcommittee as the best way to address this requirement.

**Ms. Ridder moved to form a Public-Private Partnership Subcommittee. Mr. Lindahl seconded. Roll call vote: Cone-Yes, Buker-Yes, Turman-Yes, Lindahl-Yes, Spray-Yes, Shoemaker-Yes, Graham-Yes, Hunnicutt-Yes, Rippe-Yes, Ridder-Yes, and Toner-Yes. Results: Yes-11, No-0 and Abstained-0. Motion carried.**

Timothy Lindahl and Tom Shoemaker volunteered to serve on the Public-Private Partnership Subcommittee.

Mr. Rippe left the meeting.

#### **MIDDLE MILE DISCUSSION**

*Jason Axthelm, NebraskaLink*

At the last meeting, middle mile costs were identified as a potential issue. As a follow-up, Tom Rolfes, the Education IT Manager for the NITC, analyzed Ethernet circuit costs for Network Nebraska bid in 2016. There were significant differences in the average cost per Mbps per month by Educational Service Unit (ESUs) areas in Nebraska with costs for the highest-cost ESUs being over 3 times the costs for the lowest-cost ESUs. Average costs are highest in northeast and southwest Nebraska, with ESU 7 in Columbus and ESU 8 in Neligh in northeast Nebraska having higher than average costs at 40 Mbps and 100 Mbps and ESU 15 in Trenton in southwest Nebraska having higher than average costs at 100 Mbps and 1000 Mbps.

Jason Axthelm from NebraskaLink gave the task force background information on how circuits are priced and showed maps of NebraskaLink's fiber. Mr. Axthelm answered questions from task force members.

#### **UPDATE ON SUBCOMMITTEES**

The **Broadband Data Subcommittee** met on November 19. Invited stakeholders included Cullen Robbins from the Nebraska Public Service Commission, Nick Paden—a regulatory lobbyist, Dr. Tim Obermier and Dr. Matt Miller from the University of Nebraska Kearney, Ansley Mick from Nebraska Farm Bureau, and Tim Ericson from the Legislative Research Office. The subcommittee discussed what information is available on the FCC's Form 477 and obtained additional information on the speed test and broadband cost studies being conducted by the University of Nebraska Kearney and Nebraska Farm Bureau.

The **NUSF Subcommittee** met on November 19 with 14 stakeholders representing mobile wireless carriers, fixed wireless carriers, rate of return carriers, price cap carriers, the public service commission, and an economist from the University of Nebraska. The subcommittee discussed the role of the NUSF in bringing comparable and affordable broadband services to rural residences and if the fund has deterred or delayed capital formation, broadband competition, and broadband deployment.

The **Broadband Technologies Committee** has not met yet. Anne Byers has contacted subcommittee members to schedule a meeting.

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

**Mr. Cone moved to adjourn. Mr. Honeycutt seconded. All were in favor. Motion carried.**

The meeting was adjourned at 11:55 a.m.

Meeting minutes were taken by Lori Lopez Urdiales and reviewed by Anne Byers, Office of the CIO.