

MINUTES OF NEBRASKA TRS ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING
January 28, 2022 1:30 p.m. CDT
Location: Nebraska Public Service Commission
300 The Atrium, 1200 N Street (Commission Hearing Room), Lincoln Nebraska

1. **Roll Call.** The Nebraska Telecommunications Relay Advisory Committee met on January 28, 2022 at 1:30 p.m. at the Public Service Commission hearing room.

The meeting was called to order at 1:31 p.m. by Tami Richardson-Nelson. The following committee members were present:

Tami Richardson-Nelson
Commissioner Tim Schram

Robert Feit and Norm Weverka did not attend. Jerry Siders previously indicated he would no longer be serving. There was no quorum within which to conduct business.

2. **Introduction of Guests.** From the Commission, Cullen Robbins, Director of Communications, Steve Stovall, Accountant/TRS Administrator, Jonathan Smith, Attorney representing legal support for TRS issues for the Commission, John Monroe, Executive and Technical Assistant, Thomas Golden, Executive Director and Deb Collins (joining remotely), Media and Communications Manager; Representing the Nebraska Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (NCDHH) was John Wyvill, Executive Director; Representing T-Mobile Accessibility, Emma Danielson (joining remotely), T-Mobile Relay Program Manager; Sharon Sinkler and Frances Beurivage interpreted the meeting.
3. **Election of New Officers – Chairperson and Vice Chairperson. N/A-No Quorum.** Current Officers are Tami Richardson-Nelson (Chair) and Norm Weverka (Vice-Chair).
4. **Approval of the Agenda. N/A-No Quorum.**
5. **Approval of the Minutes of the January 29, 2021 Meeting. N/A-No Quorum.**
6. **Chairperson’s Comments:** Tami inquired about the process in which T-Mobile customers acquire smartphones and why they cannot do a multi-store solution. Concerns about the multi-part form that must be completed and, at times, long wait periods before acquiring the device. Steve Stovall indicated he will confer with Cullen, Jonathan and T-Mobile about revising this process.
7. **Public Service Commission Comments:**
 - 1) Update on Text-to-911 Implementation in Nebraska (Director, Dave Sankey).
Dave presented three colorized maps for the committee’s review:
 - Nebraska Text to 911 Implementation;
 - Nebraska PSAP Regionalization and;
 - Nebraska ESInet Progress.

The Nebraska Text to 911 provided an updated status of counties that have live Text to 911 technology implemented, counties in the process of implementing Text to 911 and

counties not yet implemented. Dave indicated that transitioning to NextGen 911 is a lengthier process. Dave also indicated that Omaha is set to go live for NextGen 911 mid-February. North-Central region will follow thereafter.

- 2) Updated Relay Statistics (Steve Stovall);
- 3) Equipment Program Update (Steve Stovall). Steve discussed items 2 and 3. Steve provided two TRS surcharge assumptions at the two-cent (\$.02) and three-cent (\$.03) rates. Steve noted that minutes of use significantly increased again in December 2020 – May 2021. The projections beginning January 2022 take those increases into consideration. For NSTEP expenditures, column J, for October 2021 of the \$439,658 amount, \$419,361 is attributable to Verizon redemptions. These redemptions are comprised of two periods – 1) \$348,447 for June 1, 2020 – June 30, 2021 redemptions and 2) \$70,914 for July 1, 2021 – August 30, 2021. The thirteen-month average of \$348,447 is \$26,804 and for \$70,914 an average of \$35,457 for those two months. Consequently, the \$42,000 projections for NSTEP comprises \$30,000 for Verizon redemptions and \$12,000 for all other redemptions (including the other three non-Verizon wireless provider).

The fund balance assuming the surcharge stays at three-cents (\$.03) approaches \$487,520 for FY 2022-23 and declines to \$237,387 assuming a two-cent (\$.02) rate. Considering the uncertainty regarding the COVID environment and the need for more consistent payment history for Verizon redemptions, Steve proposed to keep the surcharge at three cents (\$.03). Concerns were expressed by those present that as the fund attains higher levels it will invite ‘raiding’ of those funds by the state.

John Wyvill presented the possibility of the NSTEP program paying for mobile apps for hearing-disabled users. South Dakota is already doing this. Concerns were raised regarding whether this fits the definition of ‘Specialized Telecommunications Equipment (STE)’ in statute, and whether a statutory change would be required.

- 4) Summary of Legislative Bills Introduced That Impacts the Relay Fund (Cullen Robbins). Cullen mentioned that there were several broadband-related bills introduced during the 2022 session, but that no bills directly impact TRS.
- 5) Update Committee on NPSC Broadband Bridge Program (Cullen Robbins). Approximately \$17.8 million was awarded during the first round of grants. Another round of grants is scheduled this year. The speed requirement is symmetrical (100/100 Mbps, download/upload requirement).
- 6) Determination of Surcharge for July 1, 2022 Assessment Period. Docket C-5360, ‘In the matter of the Commission on its own motion, seeking to determine the surcharge for the statewide Telecommunications Relay System (TRS) to be effective July 1, 2022.’ Hearing time is March 15, 2022 at 11:00 am (Steve Stovall). Not applicable for vote due to no quorum.
- 7) Proposal For Bylaw Change Regarding Required Meetings (N/A-No Quorum).

8. **Nebraska Commission For The Deaf and Hard Of Hearing (NCDHH) Comments:**

- 1) Advisory Committee Members Terms – Appointments/New Appointments.
 - Norm Weverka and Robert Feit were reappointed to three-year terms beginning March 15, 2019 – March 15, 2022 per the March 15, 2019 NCDHH Advisory Board meeting;

- Commissioner Tim Schram and Tami Richardson-Nelson were reappointed March 12, 2021 and are serving a three-year term March 12, 2021 – March 12, 2024;
- Jerry Sider indicated he would no longer be serving due to health reasons. His term ended July 12, 2021;
- There are now three (3) vacancies on this committee – 1) one position representing speech-disabled individuals; 2) one representing the telephone industry and; 3) One representing the public.

Cullen indicated that he has reached out to Hamilton for a representative for the telephone industry.

9. **T-Mobile Accessibility Comments:**

- 1) T-Mobile Presentation On Recent Activities and Outreach Plans for 2022. Emma Danielson provided the updates.
- 2) New website implemented for Nebraska Relay. Link to the website is <https://nebraskarelay.com/resources-4/>.

Concerns were shared by the group on the necessity of having captioning during presentations. John Monroe indicated that Webex has such a feature and will be incorporated for future meetings.

10. **Old Business:**

11. **New Business:**

12. **Public Comment:**

13. **Next Meeting: To be Scheduled.** Since there was no quorum, alternate dates were provided for a subsequent meeting prior to the March 15 surcharge hearing. This would be needed if a formal recommendation from the committee was provided. It was decided the next meeting will be held February 25, 2022 at 1:30 at the Commission hearing room.

Meeting adjourned 2:54 p.m. by Tami Richardson-Nelson.