

**NEBRASKA TRS ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING**  
**January 25, 2019, 1:30 p.m. CDT**  
**Location: Nebraska Public Service Commission**  
**300 The Atrium, 1200 N Street (Commission Hearing Room),**  
**Lincoln, Nebraska.**

The Nebraska Telecommunications Relay Advisory Committee met on January 25, 2019 at the Public Service Commission Hearing Room in Lincoln, Nebraska.

The meeting was called to order at 1:30 p.m. by Tami Richardson-Nelson. The following committee members were present at the meeting:

Robert Feit  
Tami Richardson-Nelson  
Commissioner Tim Schram  
Norm Weverka

Jerry Sider indicated in advance he could not attend the meeting.

**Introduction of Guests:**

From the Commission, Commissioner Dan Watermeier, District 1, Sallie Dietrich, Staff Attorney, Cullen Robbins, Director of Communications and Steve Stovall, Accountant; Representing Sprint Communications, Chris Smith, Senior Account Executive, Emma Danielson, Sprint Relay Program Manager and Peter Seiler, Outreach Specialist; Representing the Nebraska Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (NCDHH) was John Wyvill, Executive Director; From the public, Karen Weverka. Sharon Sinkler and Ben Sparks interpreted the meeting.

**Election of New Officers:**

Motion by Bob Feit to nominate Tami Richardson-Nelson as Chair. Seconded by Commissioner Tim Schram. Motion approved by all members present. Bob Feit moved to elect Norm as Vice-Chair. Seconded by Commissioner Tim Schram. Motion approved by all members present.

**Approval of the Agenda:**

Motion by Bob Feit, seconded by Commissioner Tim Schram, to approve the agenda as presented. Motion approved.

**Approval of the Minutes of January 19, 2018 meeting:**

Motion by Norm Weverka, seconded by Bob Feit, to approve the minutes as presented. Motion approved.

**Chairperson's Comments:**

Tami expressed gratitude for the continued involvement by the committee members.

**Public Service Commission Comments:**

- 1. Updated Relay Statistics (Steve Stovall).** Steve presented an Excel spreadsheet that provided historical and projected revenues, expenses and changes in fund balances to the committee. Historical and projected call volume and cost data was shared with the committee. Three forecast scenarios were presented for the next assessment period July 1, 2019 – June 30, 2020; 1) forecast #1 assumes the surcharge remains at its present one-cent (\$.01) rate; 2) forecast #2 assumes the surcharge is adjusted to a two-cent (\$.02) rate and; 3) forecast #3 assume the surcharge is adjusted to a three-cent (\$.03) rate. Mr. Stovall informed the committee that any targeted media awareness campaigns are not included in the projections. Steve informed the committee that a one-cent surcharge cannot sustain the fund balance beginning July 1. The fund balance, assuming a one-cent surcharge continues for FY 2019-20 is projected at (\$296,783). The fund balance is projected at (\$50,709) for FY 2019-20 if the rate increased to two-cents. Forecast scenario #3 presents a fund balance projected at \$197,310 and seems a more viable solution to begin building the fund balance to a more reasonable reserve.

Inherent difficulties in the cost projections is estimating the new relay rates since the current contract will expire June 30, 2019. The committee was updated on recent Request for Proposal (RFP) activity for the new relay contract. The projections include a 50% increase in the current contract rate, from \$2.24 to \$3.36 in year one and another 15% increase in year two. For captioned telephone service (CapTel) the projections assume a 15% increase from \$1.89 to \$2.17 in year one and another 5% increase for year two.

Bob Feit made a motion to recommend to the Commission to increase the surcharge for the telecommunications relay service to a three-cent (\$.03) level effective July 1, 2019. Norm seconded. Upon approval of all committee members present, three voted in support with one abstention. Tami-Richardson-Nelson, as chair of the committee, agreed to provide a letter to the Commission documenting the Committee's recommendation.

- 2. Equipment Program Update (Steve Stovall).** Steve indicated that forecast assumptions in both services (traditional and CapTel relay) have been revised downward based on a review of historical trends. For the NSTEP program, an increase is presumed due to additional anticipated voucher redemptions under the Verizon wireless program. The projections put the NSTEP costs at \$22,000 monthly.
- 3. Determination of Surcharge for July 1, 2019 Assessment Period.** Steve informed the committee the surcharge proceeding on Docket C-5032 will be held in the March timeframe.
- 4. Summary of Legislative Bills Introduced That Impacts the Relay Fund (Cullen Robbins/Sallie Dietrich).**

**Legislative Bill #550.** This bill proposes to require voter approval of fees and taxes on wireless services and eliminate the Prepaid Wireless Surcharge Act. Commissioner Tim Schram will present testimony in opposition to LB 550.

**Legislative Bill #641.** This bill proposes to provide for grants under the Telecommunications Relay System Act for a 211 Information and Referral Network. The bill would provide information and referral services to the public regarding health and human services provided by public and private entities throughout the state. A provision of up to \$300,000 annually for grants are included.

Discussion by the committee centered on a disconnect between the intent of the TRS fund for providing service to the deaf and hard of hearing community versus providing general health and human services to the public. The TRS fund was designed with a specific scope of services. Also, it could present an adverse financial impact on the fund if the surcharge must also cover grants. Commissioner Tim Schram and John Wyvill encouraged the committee to disseminate information and educate the public and senators regarding the consequences of these bills. Steve Stovall was directed to keep the committee informed on the status of these two bills.

### **Nebraska Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (NCDHH) Comments:**

**Advisory Committee Members terms.** Member's terms are summarized as follows:

- 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 September 19, 2018 and are serving a three-year term September 19, 2018 – September 19, 2021;
- Jerry Sider was appointed July 12, 2018 and is serving a three-year term beginning July 12, 2018 – July 12, 2021
- There are still two (2) vacancies on this committee – 1) one position representing speech-impaired individuals and; 2) one representing the telephone industry.

All appointments are made by the Nebraska Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (NCDHH) Board.

### **Sprint Telecommunications Comments:**

Emma Danielson gave a presentation to update the committee on recent activities and outreach plans for Sprint in 2019. Additional suggestions for outreach events provided by the committee included Saltdog baseball games, volleyball games/tournaments, Lincoln Marathon and medical professionals that specialize in geriatrics. Also, nursing homes and assisted-living facilities.

**Old Business:** None.

**New Business:** None provided.

**Public Comment:** Dave Sankey, Director of the 911 Service System Fund (NextGen 911) provided an update on recent activities of this department. An RFP is being developed for a consultant and for a vendor to provide network interconnectivity to the IP network. A map depicting the status of Nebraska text-to-911 implementation at the county level was provided to the committee. The southeast region of Nebraska can perform text-to-911. Dave informed the committee that you may still receive a 'not available' message on your device if your wireless carrier does not support text-to-911 capability. The committee was informed that the location identification still works off the cell towers, but a handset-based solution is being developed. Dave encouraged members of the committee to apply for open positions on the Service System Advisory Committee (SSAC).

**Next Meeting:** To be scheduled as needed.

Meeting adjourned at 3:32 p.m. by Tami Richardson-Nelson.

Respectfully submitted,  
Steven G. Stovall - Staff Accountant  
Nebraska Public Service Commission  
December 31, 2019