

NEBRASKA TRS ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING
January 31, 2020, 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 31, 2020 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 would join the meeting late.

Introduction of Guests:

From the Commission, Cullen Robbins, Director of Communications, Steve Stovall, Accountant and Dillon Keiffer-Johnson, Staff Attorney for the Commission; Representing Sprint Communications, Emma Danielson, Sprint Relay Program Manager (via teleconference link); Representing the Nebraska Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (NCDHH) was John Wyvill, Executive Director; From the public, Karen Weverka, Deb Collins, Public Information Officer for the Commission, and Marie Protasky, Outreach Specialist for Sprint (in training). Sharon Sinkler and Frances Beurivage interpreted the meeting.

Election of New Officers:

Motion by Bob Feit to nominate Tami Richardson-Nelson as Chair. Seconded by Jerry Sider. 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 Norm Weverka, seconded by Bob Feit, to approve the agenda as presented. Motion approved.

Approval of the Minutes of January 25, 2019 meeting:

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

Chairperson's Comments:

Tami expressed gratitude for the continued involvement by the committee members and the Public Service Commission.

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. Steve informed the committee that minutes of use and cost projections utilize rates under the new Sprint contract effective July 1, 2019. The Commission staff decided to also go to a conversation-based methodology for traditional relay. Two forecast scenarios were presented for the next assessment period July 1, 2020 – June 30, 2021; 1) forecast #1 assumes the surcharge remains at its present three-cent (\$.03) rate and; 2) forecast #2 assumes the surcharge is reduced to a two-cent (\$.02) rate. Mr. Stovall informed the committee that any targeted media awareness campaigns are not included in the projections. Steve also informed the committee that a two-cent surcharge depicted in forecast #2 cannot sustain the fund balance in FY 2020-21. The fund balance, assuming the three-cent surcharge continues for FY 2020-21 is projected at \$306,374. The fund balance is projected at \$63,303 for FY 2020-21 if the rate is reduced to two-cents. The forecast scenario at the three-cent (\$.03) rate seems a more viable solution to begin building the fund balance to a more reasonable reserve. Steve proposed the three-cent option to the committee.

Sprint's contract pricing for traditional relay conversation rates go to \$3.39 for years one – three (FY 2019-22) and \$3.67 for years four-five (FY 2022-24). Sprint's CapTel contract pricing at conversation rates increase to \$2.16 for years one – three (FY 2019-22) and \$2.26 for years four – five (FY 2022-24).

Concerns were shared by both John Wyvill and Bob Feit regarding a lack of customer service for Verizon wireless and local representation for quality of service issues – especially with the deaf and hard-of-hearing. Bob's concern is not having a visual-based means from providers communicating with the community regarding problems.

Norm Weverka made a motion to recommend to the Commission the surcharge for the telecommunications relay service remain at its present three-cent (\$.03) level effective July 1, 2020. Bob Feit 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 \$28,000 monthly.
- 3. Determination of Surcharge for July 1, 2020 Assessment Period.** Steve informed the committee the surcharge proceeding on Docket C-5094 will be held in the March timeframe. Date was set by the Commission for March 24, 2020 at 11:00 in the

Commission hearing room.

4. Summary of Legislative Bills Introduced That Impacts the Relay Fund (Cullen Robbins).

Legislative Bill #550. This bill originally introduced for the 2019 session proposed to require voter approval of fees and taxes on wireless services and eliminate the Prepaid Wireless Surcharge Act. Commissioner Tim Schram testified in opposition to LB 550. The bill was held over after an amendment was offered that removed the concerns of the PSC. If it comes up for debate again, the legislature would have to deal with the amendment first

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 support for development of a website that would provide information and referral services to the public for a variety of public services. A provision of up to \$300,000 annually for grants were included. An amendment shifted the fund obligation from the TRS to the Health and Human services fund. A \$300,000 grant was awarded to United Way of the Midlands by Commission order in January 2020.

Legislative Bill #992. This bill implements recommendations of the Rural Broadband Task Force, including:

- The establishment of a State Broadband Coordinator;
- Four (4) regional technicians with the Library Commission that would provide technical support to public libraries across the state;
- Establishes an E-Rate Special Construction Matching Funds Program, which would provide state support for construction programs that bring fiber to libraries and potentially, schools.

5. Update on Text-to-911 Implementation in Nebraska (Director, Dave Sankey). Dave presented two colorized maps for the committee's review;

- Nebraska Text to 911 Implementation and;
- Nebraska PSAP Regionalization.

The Nebraska Text to 911 provided a 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 a RFP (Request for Proposal) is being issued for the buildout of a statewide IP-based network. The plan would be for all PSAPs to be interconnected to this IP network.

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. John Wyvill indicated that in the past the member representing the telephone industry was solicited from the Nebraska Telephone Association (NTA). Cullen, Steve or Tim Schramm were solicited to follow up with the telephone industry appointment to this committee.

John Wyvill indicated that Bob Feit is a member of the full NCDHH Board. There are two legislative bills – LB 965 and 839 he summarized. There is a bill that proposed to make ASL a recognized official state language.

Sprint Telecommunications Comments:

Emma Danielson gave a presentation to update the committee on recent activities and outreach plans for Sprint in 2020. Additional suggestions for outreach events provided by the committee. John Wyvill suggested that to Emma that Google Analytics be utilized for web inquiries to determine where the visitors are coming from.

Old Business: None.

New Business: None provided.

Public Comment: None.

Next Meeting: To be scheduled as needed.

Meeting adjourned at 3:26 p.m. by Tami Richardson-Nelson.

Respectfully submitted,
Steven G. Stovall - Staff Accountant
Nebraska Public Service Commission
April 21, 2020