



## Washington Association of Telecommunications Officers & Advisors

*A professional organization of individuals and organizations serving citizens in the development, regulation, and administration of cable television and other telecommunication systems.*

### **WATOA Board Retreat Minutes October 13, 2023 Ellensburg, WA**

1. Call to Order – 10:26 AM
2. Roll Call of Officers

WATOA Board Position	Board Members	Present	Absent
President	Jon Funfar, City of Pasco	x	
Vice-President	Chris Jaramillo, King County	x	
Board Secretary	Megan Hutton, Pierce County	x	
Treasurer	Alice Lawson, City of Seattle	x	
Regional Rep: District 1 (North & Puget)	Ben Skudlarek, City of Bellingham	x	
Regional Rep: District 2 (King)	Patti Belle, City of Kent	x	
Regional Rep: District 3 (Puget & Coast)	George Geyer, Kitsap County	x	
Regional Rep: District 4 (Southwest)	Jim Demmon, City of Vancouver	x	
Regional Rep: District 5 (Rainier Valley)	Jon Baker, Pierce County PPW	x	
Regional Rep: District 6 (Central)	Ben Faubion, City of Ellensburg	x	
Regional Rep: District 7 (Northeast)	Jessica Fisher, City of Spokane	x	
Regional Rep: District 8 (Tri-Cities)	Mark Ingham, Richland		x
Regional Rep: District 9 (At-Large)	Edgar Riebe, Seattle Public Schools		x
Past-President	Jeff Lueders, City of Tacoma		x

3. Approval of the agenda
  - a. Unanimously approved
4. Approval of minutes
  - a. 3/24/23 Board retreat minutes, Jim motion, George 2<sup>nd</sup>, unanimously approved
5. Treasurer's report – Alice Lawson
  - a. Previous balance
    - i. 8/31/23 - \$21,861.09
  - b. Adjusted ending balance
    - i. 9/30/23 - \$19,686.90
    - ii. NATOA chapter dues \$1050
  - c. Motion to increase amount to cover WATOA dinner. Original was \$700, motion to increase to \$975. George motion, Ben S second, approved. Chris Jaramillo was the only dissenting vote.
    - i. A discussion followed about the expectations around that dinner.
    - ii. It was intended to cover appetizers and one drink, not a full meal plus appetizers for guests. The group was larger than expected, and also welcomed unexpected guests including two attorneys and one vendor, who serve the members of our Board.
  - d. 27 member agencies, 73 members
6. Legislative/Policy/Legal Cmte.

- a. HB3557 - Jon Funfar and Alice Lawson educated the Board about a group of individual bills that were grouped together at the federal level. It touches many of the ways cable/wireless is regulated and would strip a lot of local control. Even if it passes the House, it's unlikely to pass the Senate. NATOA's recommendation is to kill the bill and start over. The goal is to help legislators understand that the bills won't achieve what they think it will.
  - i. Texas is a good case study for what happened when regulations were stripped. They're slated to receive the biggest allotment of federal broadband funds because of the gaps. Lack of regulations did not incentivize companies to come in naturally.
  - ii. There was a conversation about WATOA could do, including lobbying federal leaders, and putting together talking points, which Jon will draft and send to the Board.
- b. Lots of Digital Equity talk coming from the State. Board members were encouraged to seek out a lot of information coming from the Broadband office about the \$1.2 Billion for State of Washington (\$42.5 Billion nationwide).
  - i. Board members discussed that the State is still talking very broadly about this, not a lot of detail yet. Lots of conversations about un-served versus underserved. And where money will be best spent – going the distance to reach rural areas, or reaching more people in underserved urban/suburban areas.
  - ii. Jon Baker with Pierce County talked about his experience of trying to contest addresses on the FCC broadband maps.
    - 1. Alice Lawson added some ideas to tackle the problem. She also led with some caution that the State Broadband office is seeing staffing issues and is listening to industry more than other stakeholders.
- c. Connectivity programs offered by cable providers
  - i. Internet Essentials was \$10, is now \$30 a month
  - ii. BEAD funding is for construction buildout but not the service itself. You can get it to the whole, but can people afford devices and service costs
  - iii. ACP program, it may not be federally funded, but it isn't going away. A fee may be added to existing customer bills to support the program.

## 7. Committee Assignments

- a. Policy/Legal Cmte - Alice, George, Jon, Ben F
- b. PEG/Production/Communications – Jim, Edgar, Megan, Jessica, Ben S
- c. Membership – Chris
- d. Nominating – Jeff Lueders

## 8. Ballot coming in December

## 9. Brian Wilson scholarships

- a. No responses or interest. There was a board discussion about how NATOA went and the cost of attending that conference.

## 10. By-laws changes

- a. Megan, George, Jeff – set date to meet in November, have changes ready to present at Nov. 29 Board mtg
- b. Some wording and legibility changes, and adding a section that allows for changes.
- c. Most of that work is done thanks to George Geyer.
- d. Add expectation for board attendance and committee assignments – Chris Jaramillo will draft language.
- e. Changes will go on December ballot

## 11. November's Board meeting was moved to November 29<sup>th</sup> – the last Wednesday, to avoid Thanksgiving week

## 12. 2024 conference – what are we thinking?



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- a. Jim Demmon is recommending we consider a conference every other year.
- b. Survey members about topics
- c. What's the board appetite to absorb the amount of work necessary to pull off a conference successfully?
- d. What other conferences conflict with what WATO offers?
- e. Alice, Chris, Megan – work on a template for the schedule and to-do checklist of conference responsibilities, prep in the month of November.
- f. **October 23-25, 2024 for a fall WATO conference** in Richland (same hotel as before, renovated now)

13. Adjournment – 3:13 pm