



## 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 Meeting Minutes April 11, 2025 (Board Retreat)

1. Call to Order – 10:04 AM
2. Roll Call of Officers

WATOA Board Position	Board Member	Present	Absent
President	Mike Connor, City of Kirkland	X	
Vice-President	Ben Skudlarek, City of Bellingham	X	
Board Secretary	Megan Hutton, Pierce County		X
Treasurer	Alice Lawson, City of Seattle	X	
Regional Rep: District 1 (North & Puget)	Candy Galindo, City of Mount Vernon	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	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, City of Richland	X	
Regional Rep: District 9 (At-Large)	Edgar Riebe, Seattle Public Schools	X	
Past-President	None in 2025		

3. Approval of the agenda
  - a. Approved
4. Approval of minutes
  - a. 3/25/25 Board Meeting
    - i. Ben S. motion, Patti second, to approve.
  - b. 10/13/23 Board Retreat
    - i. Mike motion, Jim second, to approve.
5. Committee Accomplishments
  - a. Legislative
    - i. Alice - Monitoring Washington State legislative process. No big concerns last year. Device legislation has had no traction.
      1. Prep for loss of Cable franchise funding.
      2. Aligned with stakeholder groups and co-signed some of their letters.
      3. Monitoring this legislative session and looking for opportunities to participate
    - ii. Ben S. - Broadband Franchising Fees monitoring Minnesota
  - b. Membership
    - i. 24 renewed memberships
    - ii. Patti - Talk about reaching out to neighboring cities. Need tools to help - proposing an FAQ, QR code, and/or flyer. Video to promote WATOA.
    - iii. Alice - What is our value proposition going forward? We have a lot more competition in the telecommunications setting.
    - iv. Patti - Sell the group as hyper local. Promote the networking aspect of WATOA and the diversity of our board members positions.
    - v. Ben F. - Suggest participation of the Association of Washington Cities upcoming events.

- vi. Candy - Website – add video about organization, and industry tips
  - vii. More online opportunities for members and non-members
  - viii. Ben S. - Create a Fileshare - Where we can share video programming for our channels.
  - c. Policy/Legal
  - d. Production
  - e. Communications (Patti & Jess both interested in 2025)
    - i. Jess - 15 Conference Blasts promoting the 2024 conference
      - 1. Held the 2024 WATOA Conference!!
      - 2. Website – love to add a recruiting section & showcase your work
    - ii. Patti - Need to figure out our messaging for recruitment and awareness.
  - f. Events
6. Legislative/NATOA Update – Mike Lynch, NATOA Legislative Director
- a. NATOA
    - i. GPA award deadline Monday
    - ii. Community Broadband and Equity Awards – April 18 deadline (no fee)
  - b. Senate Commerce Committee Hearings
    - i. Olivia Trusty probably newest member of the FCC – replacement for chairwomen (term starting in June for 5 years)
    - ii. Arielle Roth – nominee for Assistant Secretary of Commerce and Communications
    - iii. BEAD \$42B money is tied up. Senator Ted Cruz is against equity language. Language addresses seniors, vets, rural communities, etc. Shift program to satellite broadband. Challenges include signal strength and capacity.
  - c. Free Press NDIA Article – saying \$2.75B digital equity grants frozen. No formal statement.
  - d. Congress New Bills
    - i. American Broadband Deployment Act
      - 1. Passed in 2024. Designed for provider preference, not city preference.
      - 2. 2025 version wants to eliminate permitting. Let providers build without a permit.
    - ii. Preserving Community Television Act – will be announced in 2-3 weeks
    - iii. Mike will send NATOA Policy Committee notes
  - e. Congressional Research Committee – looking at future funding for PEG
  - f. PEG Funding among WA Stations
    - i. Making less PEG money but still needing more money
    - ii. Deliver the message to residents and City government officials that the cable fee is paying for your free City channel
    - iii. Bellingham is getting some of their budget from the Tech Fund Budget.
      - 1. All departments are benefiting from your videos and channel. They should pay for those services.
    - iv. Kent has a similar structure, where city departments are paying for their services
  - g. Supreme Court case – lifeline broadband and phone.
    - i. USF e-rate fee on your telephone bill –
  - h. Moving Forward in 2025!
    - i. Might have to propose a bill to state legislation
    - ii. Minnesota example – attaching a use fee to streamers
    - iii. Reachout to the state to see if they would develop a fund for community news and civic engagement.
      - 1. May not pass but get you the connections you need
    - iv. Mike is going to share some proposed bills from other states
  - i. Community news is the last connection between residents and the government.
7. PEG Funding Among WA Station Continued w/o Mike Lynch
- a. Patti – Transparency of government is very important.
  - b. Alice - suggests we could work on proposed bills for upcoming legislative sessions
  - c. Candy – increased engagement and expectations for council meetings, board meetings, etc.
  - d. Messaging – we need to be accessible to our communities. Explain the loss of PEG funds.
  - e. Easy is going to be headquartered in Kent
  - f. Livestream vs. cable
    - i. Seeing live stats helps legitimize our work



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- g. Members are sharing how we are reaching our audience
  - i. Video press releases
  - ii. Newsletters – reaching local news stations
  - iii. Local stations taking our video packages and adding
  - iv. Recap videos of long meetings
8. Ben S. motions to resume after lunch at 1:15 p.m., Mike seconds, approved.
9. Committee Assignments – Mike will be sending a poll after this meeting for preferred assignments
  - a. Alice suggests less overlap
  - b. Ben S. – suggests fewer committees. Combine similar topics
    - i. Abolish membership committee – should be everyone’s responsibility
  - c. Candy – add an education committee
  - d. Alice – quarterly newsletter included educational topics
    - i. Committees could each provide educational opportunities
  - e. George – less committees would get more people involved
  - f. Jess – if we get rid of membership committee it should join communications
  - g. Alice – take out bylaws and events.
    - i. Outreach committee – communications, membership, website, messaging
  - h. Jim – why are we focused on membership growth? We do not need the money.
  - i. Candy – more education and opportunities to network
  - j. Ben. F. & Alice – we need to define ourselves before recruiting more members
  - k. Alice – ramp up our offerings especially in a nonconference year
  - l. Ben S. - ListServe is underutilized. People reach out individually.
    - i. We need to communicate more with members i.e. newsletter, websites, officer hours?, facility tours
  - m. Jim – suggests roundtables, webinar, east side visit
  - n. Candy – hire some educators for webinars
  - o. Proposed Suggested Committee Structure**
    - i. **Legislative/Policy** – advocate to state gov, monitor federal gov, propose bills, lobbying
    - ii. **Communications** – website, membership, overall messaging, ListServe, promotional materials
    - iii. **Education** – events, conferences, best practices, webinar
  - p. Ben F. – Do we want to focus on lobbying for PEG funding? WATOA does not have lobbying experience. We would have to shop the bill and find a sponsor.
  - q. Candy – Do we want to advocate?
  - r. Alice – Conference feedback mentioned a lack of advocacy & lobbying on this topic
  - s. Ben F. – we need to help our membership with this PEG pivot.
    - i. A lot of us are under IT branch
  - t. Mike & Ben – expanding streaming at their cities. Is this part of the pivot?
  - u. WATOA Current Mission Statement**
    - i. The purposes of our organization are:
    - ii. Share information about cable and telecommunications issues and activities affecting local governments;
    - iii. Improve the administration of cable TV franchises;
    - iv. Provide technical assistance to members;
    - v. Provide a forum for the open and balanced discussion and debate of telecommunications issues;
    - vi. Communicate with other professional organizations for the overall improvement of telecommunications services to the public, and to establish an active role in the

development of telecommunications policy at the State and Federal level in a manner consistent with applicable laws.

- v. Jim - Do we need to focus less on franchises? Do we need to be more focused on messaging that government should be open and engaging?
  - i. Education
    - 1. Suggested webinar topics – legislative PEG talk, copper wire, \_\_\_\_\_, social media (vertical production)
  - ii. Comms – update mission statement, develop communications materials
  - iii. Policy – steps we can do this year, lobby 101 prep for hiring a lobbyist
- w. Mike – shared he made a video template for this social media team
- x. Jess – shared City Cable 5 is producing vertical video along with traditional video
- y. I make a motion to abolish current committees and restructure for 2025.
  - i. Ben S. first, Jon second, not
  - ii. Nay – everyone
- z. I move to restructure the committees for the 2025 year to include
  - i. legislative/policy committee whose purpose is to advocate to state and federal legislative issues,
  - ii. outreach committee which is comprised of communications, website, membership and ListServe, and
  - iii. education committee comprised of member of both production and policy/legal tracks which focuses on creating education opportunities for WATOA members.
    - 1. Ben S. first, Jon B. second, approved.

#### 10. Post NAB Round Up speakers

- a. Ben & Jim

#### 11. Conference 2026

- a. How far in advance do we need to decide?
- b. Concern about budget and ability travel
- c. Revisit in December based on travel budget
- d. Mike – suggests reaching out to members and providers to see their preferences
- e. Megan has offered Pearce County as a retreat location or educational opportunities
- f. Alice – partnering with local organizations on a conference or webinar
  - i. Association of Washington Cities specifically mentioned
- g. Topic Ideas for Conference or Webinar
  - i. Ben. F. – is a member. Going to reach out to see about a collaboration.
    - 1. Webinar idea – levels of production ranging from webcam to full production. (Picture a scale of abilities) Providing classes in each level and how to move up.
  - ii. Candy - suggests free webinars to promote WATOA
  - iii. Goerge – suggests captioning legal/production topic
    - 1. Cramer Via App – used for engagement at Council Meetings

#### 12. I move that we table the discussion about WATOA 2026 Conference until December 2025.

- a. Alice first, Jim second, all approved
- b. Discussion – we will know about city budgets by then

#### 13. Next steps, polls to join committees and talk about it at next meeting.

#### 14. Scholarships Report

- a. 2023 – 2 scholarships
- b. May – 1 scholarship for a city that has not been \$1,200

#### 15. Bylaw update -annual internal audit (President, Vice Pres.

- a. Need to recruit a board member for the audit

#### 16. 3:01 Motion to adjourn

- a. Mike first, Jon second, approved