



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 January 28, 2026

1. Call to Order – 2:04 p.m.
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)	Vacant		
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 2026		

3. Approval of the agenda
 - a. Approved (Patti move, Candy second)
4. Approval of minutes
 - a. 12/3/25 minutes approved (Jim move, Patti second)
5. President's report – Mike Connor
 - a. 1st NATOA Presidents Meeting
 - i. Interested in state chapter feedback – questionnaire coming
 - ii. Membership is shrinking, exploring what is next
6. Vice President – Ben Skudlarek
 - a. Reminds members to provide comments on [House Bill 2579](#) (see Megan's 1/26 email)
7. Secretary's Report – Megan Hutton
 - a. n/a
8. Treasurer's report – Alice Lawson
 - a. Previous balance – 11/30/25
 - i. \$16,768.76
 - b. Adjusted ending balance – 12/31/25
 - i. \$15,695.56
 1. Pending payments \$300 AWC renewal
 2. Pending deposits \$0
 - c. 2025 total net income/loss - \$4,182.12
 - d. Looking for 2026 auditor
9. Committee Reports
 - a. Membership, Engagement & Nominating: Jessica, Patti, Mike. (Website, membership, overall messaging, ListServ, promotional materials, Board nominations)

- i. Still recruiting for District 3
- b. Education: Edgar, Megan, Ben S, Jim. (PEG production, equipment recommendations, events, conferences, webinars)
 - i. Post NAB invite to come!
 - ii. Still researching audio descriptions
 - 1. Jim recommends Audible Sight (\$8,800 a year, 500 hours of programming, & 15 users)
 - 2. Requesting a demo
 - 3. Choose Audible Sight over Lexis Audio Editor – Lexis did not allow editing
 - 4. Staff education on presenting instead of audio descriptions for meetings (introductions, explaining what’s on screen, saying contact information out loud)
- c. Legislative/Policy (Alice, Jon, Ben F, Candy) (Advocate to State govt, monitor Federal govt, propose bills, lobbying etc.)
 - i. AWC requesting comments on [HB 2579](#) (see Megan’s 1/26 email)
 - 1. First public hearing on Friday.
 - 2. 20 cent per month per subscriber tax on wireless, cell, prepaid wireless, VoIP, and land lines to fund the programs, provide grants, and administer programs.
 - 3. Does not include streaming services like WATOA’s draft bill
 - 4. Equipment-focused, not human-focused 😞
 - 5. Agreed, we need funding, but HB 2579 might not be the right fit for WATOA member
 - ii. Progress on proposed bill draft.
 - 1. Alice created a WATOA email to use for lobbying, don’t use your work email!!
 - 2. Talking points about the bill are finished
 - 3. Working on talking points about WATOA being an industry leader
 - iii. Amid funding concerns, some cities are reorganizing
 - 1. Seattle Channel exploring merging with Seattle Public Library – access to levy funding

10. Certify WATOA Board Election Results

- i. The 2026 Board Election process is complete and validated with 56% of voting members casting ballots. The results: the slate of candidates were elected to serve as Board members this year. There were no write-in candidates for the vacant Region 3 position.
- ii. Starting Jan. 1, 2026, these are the WATOA Board Officers and Representatives:

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iii. Alice motion to certify election results, Jim second, unanimously approved.

11. Old Business

a. WATOA Retreat

i. Leaning toward in-person with virtual option

ii. Mike sending out a poll for dates

12. New Business

a. None

13. Good of the order

a. None

14. Next Meeting – February 25 at 2:00 p.m.

15. Adjournment – 3:02 p.m.