



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 April 17, 2026 Kirkland City Hall

1. Call to Order – 10:13am
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)	Kevin Martinez, City of Kent (alternate)	x	
Regional Rep: District 3 (Puget & Coast)	Vacant- (Kitsap area)		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 2026		

3. Approval of the agenda
 - a. Approved
4. Approval of minutes 3/25/26 minutes, moved, approved
5. Committee Assignments Discussion
 - a. One change was made to the following committees:
 - i. Mark Ingham and Mike Connor were added to the education cmte
 - ii. There will be an effort to recruit non-board members to join committees
 - b. Membership & Engagement - Jessica, Patti, Mike
Covers: website, membership, overall messaging, ListServ, promotional materials
 - i. Region 3 still vacant.
 - c. Education - Edgar, Megan, Ben S, Jim, Mark, Mike, Kevin Martinez
Covers: PEG production, equipment recommendations, events, conferences, webinars
 - d. Legislative/Policy - Alice, Jon, Ben F, Candy
Covers: advocate to State govt, monitor Federal govt, propose bills, lobbying
6. Legislative Guest - Mike Lynch, NATOA Legislative Director
 - a. WCAG 2.1 will be delayed by one year. Announced today 4/17/26.
 - b. HR2289 American Broadband Deployment Act – congress is moving on this bill.
 - i. Slightly larger and more negatively impactful on ROW.
 - ii. Drastic shot clocks.
 - iii. A new deem granted rule. Means an incomplete application can come in and the shot clock starts. This new rule would be unique to wireless and wireline companies, doesn't treat utility companies the same.

1. NATOA is advocating that this bill is a big issue. Harms:
 - a. Public safety in rights of way management
 - b. It doesn't ask for a tradeoff for the industry
 - c. No low-income discounts or customer service standards
 - d. No protection against cherry picking where companies go (i.e. where the money goes)
 - e. No integration with the BEAD project
 - f. Won't require the renewal of cable (may not affect fee they're required to pay) but also restricts your ability to change them.
 - g. Big concerns about capital PEG equipment dollars, which could stop if a license agreement ends and cannot be renewed, yet the company can still operate in your ROW.
 2. Some PSAs available through NATOA that explain the negatives of the bill
 - iv. Let local legislators know. Appears there's a narrow margin in Congress to pass it.
 - v. More info available on the NATOA website including a summary.
 - c. WATOA boardmembers had a discussion following Mike Lynch's presentation:
 - i. Clark County example is complaints from homeowners that their yards are getting dug up, with little to no authority on the city/county side to help or prevent it.
 - ii. There was lots of discussion of potential loss of PEG (capital) funding, which could lead to the end of hardware for channel operation and meetings/video content going online only.
7. Lunch
8. WATOA Forward: Designing Our Future - How do we provide value for ourselves and members?
 - a. What WATOA does today
 - iii. Monthly board meetings
 - iv. Brings PEG media channel people together
 - v. Small events are revolving
 - vi. NAB Round-up
 - vii. Great way to share about issues and resources
 - viii. Lobbying at the State, legislative push
 - ix. WATOA is great for PEG but less so for legislative/policy
 - x. Raise awareness of legislative issues
 - xi. Tough to recruit new members
 - xii. Hosting one day workshops
 - xiii. Keep a connection with NATOA
 - xiv. Networking with others in the same field, alliance of colleagues
 - xv. Networking – can we do more?
 - xvi. Builds strength in negotiations
 - xvii. Email list – could be better
 - xviii. Board member comments:
 1. Consider adding all members to board meeting invites
 2. More conversation led to wanting to do invites quarterly. Make those board meetings more membership/content focused.
 - a. Motion by Candy, 2nd by Jessica to do this
 - b. More discussion: add in a member comment period, make those meetings member focused.
 3. WATOA is the only association talking about PEG and related issues and impacts
 - d. What you wish WATOA did/what we could do



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- i. Film trainings and make accessible to members
 - ii. More frequent posts to listserv
 - iii. Conference
 - iv. More webinars
 - v. Start a pool of
 - vi. Member recognition
 - vii. Collaborate with other groups like 3CMA
 - viii. FAQ on our website
 - ix. More lobbying
 - x. Do our own Washington awards
 - xi. Regular sub-cmte meetings
 - xii. Pool templates, share video assets
 - xiii. Board member comments:
 1. Restart our membership only Facebook page
 2. Start a Discord channel for casual chats
 3. A discussion was held about commitment from boardmembers, how we see our roles as volunteers, and needing more buy-in and hands-on help from boardmembers:
 - a. Consider doing more virtually, while there's still a time and place for some in-person
 - i. People felt like they could give about two hours a month including board meetings, with a burst once a year for something special.
 - b. Smaller, shorter quick (virtual) events on specific or timely topics are more valuable than an all-day in-person option with food.
 - c. Host special one-off sessions with other organizations, examples could include ACCIS (IT related), ACM, Post-NAB Seattle via Keycode Media to increase awareness of WATO A and serve a greater group
 - e. What we should no longer do
 - i. Conference (mentioned multiple times) not enough board help
 1. Motion from Ben S. to not hold a conference for the next two years because of WATO A volunteer time limitations and constrained budgets that limit travel and training. With the understanding that virtual education and opportunities will be increased to better serve membership. Candy 2nd. Unanimously approved.
 - ii. Newsletter – we haven't done one in years
 - iii. Conferences only when we can partner with other groups
9. Proposed Virtual Education sessions
- a. Post-NAB Seattle
 - b. What IT depts want video folks to know
 - c. Virtual tours or how-tos and showing off specific equipment
 - i. Mike Connor – new studio in August
 - d. Current state of cable franchising

10. Planning Session: WATOA Post-NAB gathering
 - a. Title: (A man sighs in relief) WCAG 2.1 ruling delayed one year. How vendors are preparing.
 - b. Description: A federal ruling for WCAG 2.1, to add audio description to video, has been delayed one year, to April 2027 for larger government agencies, 2028 for most cities. What development will vendors be doing to prepare audio description software in the next year? Preparing for new demands in accessibility.
 - c. Moderator: Ben Skudlarek, Television Station Coordinator, City of Bellingham
11. Legislative efforts
 - a. Alice to work on revising WATOA's request for a state-provided fund for PEG. The board discussed what would be helpful: better defining who is eligible in such a program, and defining how money can be spent (or requested if a grant style program) – specifically money for operations or capital is most helpful.
12. Good of the order
 - a. April 22 meeting is cancelled because of today's meeting.
13. Adjournment – 3:15pm