

**Pennsylvania Broadband Development Authority (PBDA)**

Board Meeting Minutes

January 16, 2025

Commonwealth Keystone Building

PUC Hearing Room #1

400 North Street, Harrisburg

Microsoft Teams Meeting

**Board members:**

- Secretary Uri Monson, Office of the Budget, Chairman
- Senator Kristin Phillips-Hill, Secretary
- Matt Franchak on behalf of Senator John Kane, Assistant Secretary
- Mark Critz on behalf of Secretary Redding, Department of Agriculture
- Patrick Grill on behalf of Representative Rob Matzie
- Representative Carl Metzgar
- Dr. Kyle Kopko, Center for Rural Pennsylvania
- Secretary Rick Siger, Department of Community & Economic Development
- Cathy Hall on behalf of Acting Interim Secretary Angela Fitterer, Department of Education
- Barb Burba-Filoreto on behalf of Secretary Reggie McNeil, Department of General Services
- Chairman Steve DeFrank, Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission

**Designees:**

- Chloe Mandara, Legislative Director, Office of Senator Phillips-Hill
- Laura Dimino, Center for Rural Pennsylvania
- Joel Cheskis, Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission

**Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) staff:**

- Brandon Carson, PBDA Executive Director
- Brandon Peters, PBDA Deputy Director
- Kalie Snyder, PBDA Outreach & Engagement Manager
- Pam Frontino, PBDA Grants Manager
- Marshall Fischer, PBDA Technical Specialist
- Tim Arthun, PBDA Policy & Program Specialist
- Charles Napier, PBDA Director of Infrastructure
- Kyle Snyder, PBDA Broadband Planning Specialist
- Dr. Stephanie Perry, PBDA Digital Equity and Workforce Specialist
- Greg Alliger, PBDA Broadband Project Manager
- Julia Brinjac, PBDA Director of Digital Equity
- Britt Muniz, PBDA Chief Counsel
- Leigh Walter, Legislative Affairs, Director
- Kaitlyn Capurro, Legal Office Administrator
- Justin Backover, Press Secretary

**In Person and virtual Guests:**

Five guests attended in person and 28 guests attended virtually.

**I. Call to Order**

Chairman Monson called the meeting to order at 10:02 a.m. and asked Mary Markle to provide housekeeping and to conduct roll call. Ms. Markle conducted roll call and confirmed quorum.

**II. Approval of November 21, 2024, Meeting Minutes**

Chairman Monson asked for questions and comments on the November 21, 2024, minutes as presented to the Board. Seeing none, he asked for a motion to approve the minutes. Motion was made by PUC Chairman, Steve DeFrank and seconded by Secretary Siger. Motion passed unanimously.

**III. Election of Secretary and Assistant Secretary**

Chairman Monson asked for nominations for Secretary. Matt Franchak, on behalf of Senator Kane, nominated Senator Kristin Phillips-Hill. Senator Phillips-Hill accepted the nomination. With no other nominations, Chair Monson asked for a motion to elect Senator Phillips-Hill. Dr. Kopko motioned to elect Senator Phillips Hill, which was seconded by Barb Burba-Filoreto. The Board voted unanimously to elect Senator Phillips-Hill as Secretary.

Chairman Monson asked for nominations for Assistant Secretary. Senator Phillips-Hill nominated Senator John Kane. On behalf of Senator Kane, Matt Franchak accepted the nomination. With no other nominations, Chairman Monson asked for a motion to elect Senator Kane. Senator Phillips-Hill motioned to elect Senator Kane which was seconded by Dr. Kopko. The Board voted unanimously to elect Senator Kane as Assistant Secretary.

**IV. Board Member Annual Disclosures**

Legal Counsel Britt Muniz advised that all Board members and designees are required to submit a Statement of Financial Interest (SFI), by May 1, 2025. She stated that an electronic or hard copy of the form is to be sent to Mary Markle. She added that any questions regarding the SFI can be directed to her or Ms. Markle.

**V. Financial Update: October – December 2024 Expenditures**

Brandon Carson presented the quarterly report noting that quarterly expenses include payroll and administrative costs. The Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), between the PBDA and the DCED includes \$3 million in administrative expenses for the current fiscal year. Mr. Carson noted that the \$1.3 million in expenditures for the first two quarters are in line with the budget for the fiscal year.

He added that, in coordination with DCED finance team, the PBDA is working on the budget for the upcoming fiscal year and will be ready for Board consideration at the April 3<sup>rd</sup> Board meeting.

**VI. Capital Projects Fund – Digital Connectivity Technology Program Update**

Brandon Peters updated that the program devices are being shipped and several press events, highlighting the recipients are scheduled. Round one of the program approved the distribution of more than 9000 devices, leaving approximately 5000 devices for round two of the program. The PBDA will host two informational sessions and the application window for round two is slated to open on April 1, 2025. Successful awardees are eligible to apply in round two, provided that the total number of devices awarded does not exceed 200 between both rounds.

**VII. Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Program Update**

Brandon Carson updated that the application window for the BEAD program has been extended to February 7, 2025. This will provide more time for applicants to develop proposals and to designate critical areas to their proposed project. Guidance on this and the announcement of the deadline extension was sent out last week. That announcement included final NTIA guidance on the use of BEAD funds for alternative technologies. Mr. Carson added that this guidance is in alignment with the PBDA's approach that the right technology is used for the right situation.

He stated that applicants are encouraged to submit applications early and to take advantage of the BEAD frequently asked questions, BEAD webinars, as well as resources on Pennsylvania's Prevailing Wage Law.

**VIII. Digital Equity Capacity Grant Approval and Next Steps**

Julia Brinjac advised that the PBDA received approval for the first tranche of the grant allowing for over \$25 million to implement the Digital Equity (DE) Plan. She shared the PBDA's proposed work elements including, a \$17 million competitive grant program, noting the timeline for the program being Q2 2025. In addition, the PBDA is proposing a comprehensive data gathering effort, operationalizing an asset inventory, and a Grants 101 training.

Ms. Brinjac added that in response to feedback that indicated the application process and grant funding management are barriers for smaller organizations, the PBDA plans to offer Grant 101 training.

PUC Chairman DeFrank asked about plans for the funds beyond the \$17 million. Ms. Brinjac responded that the additional funds would be used for the aforementioned projects as well as payroll and additional administrative costs.

Dr. Kopko commended the staff on building capacity in local areas.

**IX. Public Comment**

Chairman Monson asked Ms. Markle to facilitate the public comment session.

Todd Eachus, President of the Broadband Communications Association of Pennsylvania (BCAP)

commented that members of BCAP have shared with him that the PBDA staff has been very responsive their questions. He also expressed his concern that the current open application favors large providers and precludes smaller providers and if changes result from the prevailing wage hearings currently taking place, that will need to be addressed.

**X. Adjournment**

Chairman Monson noted that the next regular meeting will be held on April 3, 2025, and called for a motion to adjourn the meeting. PUC Chairman, Steve DeFrank made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Secretary Siger. The meeting adjourned at 10:21 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Senator Kristin Phillips-Hill  
Secretary