

Pennsylvania Broadband Development Authority

Board Meeting Minutes

October 19, 2023

Keystone Building Meeting Center – Forest Room

Microsoft Teams Meeting

Board members and voting designees in attendance:

- Secretary Uri Monson, Office of the Budget, Chairman
- Mark Critz on behalf of Secretary Russell Redding, Department of Agriculture
- Secretary Rick Siger, Department of Community and Economic Development
- Cathy Hall on behalf of Secretary Khalid Mumin, Department of Education
- Matt Bembenick on behalf of Secretary Reggie McNeil, Department of General Services
- Matt Franchak on behalf of Senator John Kane, Assistant Secretary
- Representative Rob Matzie
- Representative Carl Walker Metzgar
- Phil Kirchner, on behalf of Representative Carl Walker Metzgar
- Senator Kristin Phillips-Hill, Secretary
- Joel Cheskis on behalf of Steve DeFrank, PUC Chairman
- Dr. Kyle Kopko, Center for Rural PA

Designees in attendance:

- Chloe Mandara, Legislative Director, Office of Senator Phillips-Hill
- Rich Pronesti, Senior Committee Executive Director, PA House of Representatives
- Matt Franchak, Policy Director, Office of Senator John Kane
- Phil Kirchner, Executive Director, PA House Consumer Protection

Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) staff in attendance:

- Brandon Carson, PBDA Executive Director
- Brandon Peters, PBDA Deputy Executive Director
- Paul Opiyo, DCED Director of Policy and Planning
- Kalie Snyder, PBDA Outreach & Engagement Manager
- Pam Frontino, PBDA Grants Manager
- Julia Brinjac, PBDA Digital Equity Program Manager
- Kyle Snyder, PBDA Broadband Planning Specialist
- Stephanie Perry, PBDA Digital Equity and Workforce Specialist
- Greg Alliger, PBDA Broadband Project Manager
- Britt Muniz, PBDA Counsel
- Mary Markle, PBDA Executive Assistant
- Penny Ickes, DCED Communications Director

Guests in attendance:

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| • Russell McDaid, PA e-Commerce | • Jim Mercante, Chester County Digital Alliance | • Jim Skeveland, Rolka Loubé |
| • Beth Crow, MBI | • James Bonds | • Steve Warhola |
| • Jennifer Algoe Keaton, BCAP | • Todd Eachus, BCAP | • Fred Maldonado |
| • Brian Barno, BCAP | • Sheri Collins, McNees Strategic Solutions | • Cathleen Schultz |
| | | • Rachel Papuga, Alleghenies BB |
| | | • Ben Dannels, Greenlee |

- Kevin Cassidy, Ichor
- Matthew Szuchyt
- Bryan DeWalt
- John Mizerak, Brightspeed
- Jennifer Cloonan
- Emme Reiser, PA Realtors
- Carrie Cleary
- Rob Troxell, Upward Broadband
- Kimberly Walker, Lackawanna County
- Dominic Thecka, Adtran
- Thomas Musgrove, All Points
- Kirsten Compitello, MBI
- Ashley Pollard
- Alex Taylor
- Paige Oliver, Ichor
- Charlotte Keith
- John Mercuri
- Kristen Ritchey, Comcast
- Brandon Brenize, Adams County
- Morgan Webb
- Chris Field, University of Pittsburgh
- Juliet Fink-Yates, City of Philadelphia
- Florence Mauchant
- Aidan McLaughlin
- Marty Qually, Adams County
- Clint Cullison, Greenlee
- Norm Parrish, PA One Call
- Nate Regotti
- Bailey Thumm
- Karen White, MBI
- Jon Peha, Carnegie Mellon University
- Roy Hoover
- Pedro
- Jim

I. Call to Order

Chairman Monson called the meeting to order at 10:04 AM.
Kalie Snyder conducted a roll call of the Board members and confirmed quorum.

II. Approval of August 10, 2023, Meeting Minutes

Chairman Monson asked for questions and comments on the minutes as presented to the Board. Seeing none, he asked for a motion to approve the minutes as presented to the Board. Motion was made by Representative Matzie and seconded by Matt Franchak. Chairman Monson asked for all Board members to approve or deny the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

III. Update on Board Composition

Chairman Monson noted the retirement of Public Utility Commission (PUC) Chairwoman, Gladys Brown Dutrieuille. He thanked her and her designee, Joe Witmer, for their service to the Board. Brandon introduced new Board member, PUC Chairman, Steve DeFrank and his designee Joel Cheskis.

Joel introduced himself and provided a brief background on his work and experience with the PUC.

IV. Capital Projects Fund (CPF)- Broadband Infrastructure Program Update

Brandon Carson reported that 231 applications were received from 46 distinct applicants requesting nearly \$1 billion. He then reviewed the timeline including the current period for curing and review as well as challenge adjudication. Grant awards are anticipated in March of 2024.

V. BEAD Initial Proposal – Approval of Volume I and Update on Volume II

Brandon Peters presented an update on the Initial Proposal, noting that it is PBDA’s proposal to the NTIA encompassing the specifics of program implementation.

For Volume I he noted that section 1.1 lists the existing broadband funding, section 1.2 includes the maps illustrating unserved and underserved locations and 1.3 lists requirements for Community Anchor Institution eligibility.

Section 1.4 outlines the challenge process overview, identifying Community Anchor Institution (CAI) eligibility, enforceable commitments, and planned service. Also noted were eligible challengers and challenge process dates. Enforceable commitment is defined as the challenger having knowledge that a project will be deployed at a location by the date established in the deployment obligation. Those who can challenge include non-profits, ISPs, and local governments. Mr. Peters then went on to review the tentative timeline of the challenge process noting April 1, 2024, for the publication of eligible locations to June 29, 2024, as the final determination phase. This timeline is pending NTIA's timely approval of the Initial Proposal Volume I.

Brandon Carson clarified that this challenge process is separate from CPF challenge process.

Section 1.5 includes the public comment summary which closed on October 10, 2023, highlighting the outreach methods, and noting that 108 comments were received, largely referring to no service or poor service.

Moving onto Volume II, Brandon Peters noted the 17 sections as well as the timeline for next steps, beginning on October 16, 2023, with the 30-day public comment period, to the submission date of the Initial Proposal to NTIA prior to December 27, 2023

Brandon also mentioned the public comment webinar held by the PBDA on October 17, 2023, which provided an overview of Volume II as well as an explanation of the process for public comment, and guidance for submitting comments.

He concluded by stating that the PBDA will seek approval of Volume II at a special meeting of the Board in November.

Secretary Monson called for a roll call vote to approve Volume I of the BEAD Initial Proposal.

Chairman Monson – Yes
Mark Critz for Secretary Redding – Yes
Secretary Siger – Yes
Cathy Hall for Secretary Mumin – Yes
Matt Bembenick for Secretary McNeil – Yes
Matt Franchak for Senator Kane – Yes
Representative Rob Matzie – Yes
Representative Carl Metzgar – Yes
Senator Philips-Hill – Yes
Joel Cheskis for Chairman DeFrank – Yes
Dr. Kyle Kopko – Yes

VI. State Digital Equity Plan Presentation

Chairman Monson invited Julia Brinjac and Beth Crow to present an update on the Digital Equity (DE) Plan.

Beth began by reporting on public engagement events, beginning with the timeline encompassing roundtable discussions and community conversations that ran from June through September.

Beth said that feedback from these events contributed to the development of the DE plan and noted the presence of PBDA staff at these events was greatly appreciated by attendees and impacted the engagement and input. Beth noted that in addition to the required covered populations, invitees included workforce organizations, local governments, libraries, etc.

Senator Phillips-Hill noted missing groups, specifically mentioning agriculture, tourism, and manufacturing. She asked if these communities were specifically reached out to.

Julia responded that there is representation from the agricultural community on the Outreach and Education subcommittee and that Secretary Redding has been specifically involved in agricultural community engagement. She offered to provide a list of groups that were engaged. Senator Phillips-Hill stressed the need to connect with the agricultural community.

Beth mentioned tactics for engagement, the locations (20), the number of conversations (23), as well as total numbers of attendees (600). She added that the theme of slow to no internet creating hardships related to employment, access to telehealth and small businesses growth was prevalent. She noted that summaries of all the community conversations will be an appendix to the DE plan.

Beth reviewed numbers related to the survey. There were 6,926 surveys submitted electronically, in-person and by mail.

Beth shared feedback from the roundtable discussions which were focused on community and institutions, workforce, and justice and re-entry. Focus groups included veterans, individuals from low-income households as well as individuals with disabilities and language barriers. Beth and Julia shared many specific responses as well as common themes heard from the covered populations which reflected challenges related to cost, access, and assistance with digital literacy.

Julia reviewed DE plan components, including needs assessment, stakeholder engagement and strategy implementation as well as the definition of key terms: Digital equity, Digital inclusion, and Digital literacy.

The vision for the DE plan was shared.

The vision for digital equity in the Commonwealth is to foster and create equitable affordable and robust high-speed broadband infrastructure and services that support the digital dignity for all residents and connect Pennsylvania for the 21st century and beyond.

Digital equity assets such as device access, technical support, and affordability were also defined.

Senator Phillips-Hill added that the first asset must be service and requested that the first bullet state that.

Julia pointed out that the first of the five DE goals is access. Senator Phillips-Hill asked that the first bullet under access be changed from affordability to infrastructure.

Julia then elaborated on the next goals which addressed access to devices, knowledge, safety, and partnerships.

Beth reviewed the timeline of the plan from June 2023-January of 2024, noting additional visits to communities to share the DE plan and show them how their feedback was implemented in the DE plan.

Senator Phillips-Hill noted that Central Pa and the Northern Tier were missing from the communities listed.

Julia responded that while there are limitations to the scope of the next set of visits, other areas and additional areas can be considered.

Chairman Monson called for questions or comments.

Joel Cheskis brought up the conundrum of people without internet access not being able to participate in the sessions related to access. Julia agreed that is an ongoing battle and largely contributed to the decision to revisit communities.

Representative Matzie suggested that locations for additional facilitated public comment should be added rather than swapped out.

Chairman Monson asked that the DE presentation be circulated.

IV. Public Comment

Chairman Monson asked Kalie Snyder to conduct the public comment portion of the meeting.

Kalie began with in-person attendees.

Jim Mercante from the Chester County Digital Alliance commended PBDA's work. He stated that even with the ACP, monthly service is \$25-40 and simply not an option for many families. He asked that a no-cost option, especially for covered populations be considered.

James Bonds, noted the connection to educational and economic opportunity. He mentioned missed locations for community conversations such as barber shops and churches.

Todd Eachus, BCAP, stated the Association insist that challenges such as high-cost areas, supply chain and workforce, as well as labor rates are taken into serious consideration. He stated that at the conclusion of the expansion, he doesn't want there to be any question as to what was done with \$1.16 billion, insisting that the focus be on getting service to the under and unserved populations.

Kalie then called for questions from those online.

Hearing none, Chairman Monson concluded public comment.

V. Adjournment

Chairman Monson mentioned the intent to hold a special meeting in late November for review and approval of Volume II.

Chairman Monson called for a motion to adjourn. Motion was made by Senator Phillips-Hill and seconded by Phil Kirchner. Meeting adjourned at 11:40 AM.

Respectfully submitted,
Senator Kristin Phillips-Hill
Secretary