

Montana Telecommunications Access Program
Minutes: Full Committee Meeting
February 20, 2020
Helena, Montana

Committee Members Present: Ron Bibler, chair; Drew Arnot, vice chair; Lisa Cannon, Tina Shorten, Chanda Hermanson, Jay Preston, Barbara Varnum, Tom Thompson (via video conference) John Pavao, Sherri Odlin, Jim Streeter

Committee Members Absent: Cam Tulloch

MTAP Staff Present: Mary Taylor, Lisa Gault, Mike Bouchard

Supporting and Contributing Persons Present: Connie Phelps, Emilie Banasiak and Asia Johnson with Hamilton Relay; Shannon Little, budget analyst for MTAP, Trisha Smith and Stella Woodrum, sign language interpreters

Meeting called to order:

Ron Bibler called the meeting to order.

Approval of Minutes:

Jay Preston expressed his opposition to the approval of the MTAP budget that was discussed during the November 2019 Committee meeting. Jay explained that he had to leave the meeting early and was not present during the budget discussion, however he wanted to make sure his opposition to the budget reserve set aside for the “FCC Mandate” was on record. Barbara Varnum made a motion to approve the November minutes as amended with a notation that Jay Preston left prior to the budget report; Jay Preston seconded. All were in favor of the minutes as amended.

Public Comment:

No public comment.

MTAP Director’s report: Mary Taylor

Mary Taylor opened with the makeup of the committee, that there is still one position vacant for someone engaged in business other than telecommunications and this coming summer, there will be four positions with terms expiring (held by Drew Arnot, Lisa Cannon, Cam Tulloch and Barb Varnum). The Governor’s office will be in touch with these members to follow up on renewing their terms. She also informed the committee that MTAP’s Western Montana Communications Tech, Ricky Ballou, resigned his position to go back to graduate school so she’s in the process of hiring someone else and is currently waiting on Human Resources to do the background check and approval then hopefully this person will start mid-March.

Ms. Taylor is also in the process of purchasing a vehicle for the Billings office and she did investigate leasing a vehicle but was told that it would be a challenge in getting a 4-wheel drive SUV since the motor pool mostly

carries sedans and this would not work for the technicians who travel year around and in inclement weather. She's going to focus on getting this completed before the end of the fiscal year. She said if she stays under the 25K mark it should be easier than if the vehicle costs more than that.

Ms. Taylor went on to touch on briefly about new applications, there's an average of about 15 a month but there's been a slight spike since the new commercial came out. Past outreach included the 30th anniversary event held the day before at the Capitol as well as a local hockey game in Helena. For future outreach, there's several things coming up such as an interview Mary Taylor will be doing with Aging Horizons, as well as health fairs. Reservations were made at the Glacier Peaks Hotel in Browning for the upcoming tech fair in May. Ms. Taylor will check in with some agencies such as the Indian Health Services, VR and Blind and Low Vision to see if they want to participate with MTAP for the tech fair.

For the Facebook advertising, Ms. Taylor said it seems to be going well and the advertising for the 30th anniversary event was one of the highest interest posts. There are two contracts for Facebook – one for advertising and one for management. The management contract expired in November of 2019, but it was extended to March 31st of 2020 and the advertising one was extended to March 31st of 2020. She will put out an RFP to put both under one contract and she received help from the MTAP outreach subcommittee on putting the RFP together and it's been sent to procurement and then to the IT department; currently the RFP is waiting on one more approval. Mr. Preston inquired on the cost and Ms. Taylor replied that for management the cost is 10,500 a year and for advertising, 21,600 a year.

For the Teltex contract on equipment, it's being renewed on an annual basis and the contract will expire on May 26, 2020. Ms. Taylor plans to renew it for another year and a month, extending the contract through to the end of June to coincide with the end of the state fiscal year.

For the MTAP website update, Ms. Taylor is still searching for another vendor, and she has two so far but would like a third one. One vendor is local, and another is Devaney and Associates.

The MTAP staff has had one training which was learning about the ICanConnect program with Beverly Berg of the Blind and Low Vision division in Great Falls.

The Federal Poverty Levels has been updated on the MTAP website and Ms. Taylor will work on updating that in the Administrative Rules of Montana. Discussion ensued regarding the Federal Poverty Levels and Ms. Hermanson mentioned that the department is doing an administrative rules overhaul to see how they can rework the language regarding the publishing of the Federal Poverty Levels every year.

Ms. Taylor has submitted the annual report for the FCC, and she worked with Hamilton Relay to compare numbers and ensure that they are on the same page.

Budget Report – Shannon Little

Shannon Little opened with the budget report up to January 31, 2020 and the state is in the third quarter of the fiscal year 2020. She reported the following:

Personal services budget - \$249,054

Operations budget - \$657,726
Total budget is \$906,780

As of January 31, 2020, seven months in or 58 percent of the state fiscal year 2020 has been completed with five months remaining.

For House Bill 2 expenditures

\$145,463 in personal services which is 58.44% of the personal services budget spent.
\$297,398 in operating services which is 45.2% of the operations budget spent (not including indirect costs).
Total expenses are \$442,861 which is 48.8% of budget spent through January 31, 2020.

Ms. Little highlighted in the personnel services that with the Missoula technician vacancy, that will reduce the personnel costs until the position is filled.

She also highlighted in the operating expenses some notable categories. With the Hamilton Relay services total actual expenditures are at \$115,173 which represents an average of 45.84% spent with a remaining relay budget of \$109,827. Changes in the Hamilton contract added an additional cost of around \$5K per month or 60K annually.

Ms. Little mentioned that in the outreach category, total expenditures were \$79,868, representing 46.94% expended of the budget. Total outreach remaining budget is at \$90,202. In the travel category, expenditures are \$10,166 which is 40.67% of the budget expended with a remaining travel budget of \$14,834.

In the equipment category, total expenditures are at \$5,236 which is 32.73% of that budget spent and total equipment relating budget is \$10,764. The vehicle category has no expenses, so it remains at \$25,000.

Indirects for the state fiscal year 2020 are \$32,002 and projected cost is \$70,450. Prior year indirects actual cost are at \$19,577 and she does not anticipate any additional prior year indirect costs. Indirect costs are within the state of Montana that's outside of the division and it's the cost of running the program so it would be the budget and finance department cost for accounts receivable, accounts payable, the general ledger accountant that Ms. Little works with, auditing and also if the program uses the IT within the state or legal services, that cost will be an indirect cost as well.

Other adjustments were the \$1.5 million taken out back in August of 2019 and there's a remaining \$2 million. The other \$2 million will be expensed out in state fiscal year 2021 in August 2020. \$550,000 went to addictive and mental disorders, \$550,000 went to developmental services and \$400,000 went to Disability Employment and Transitions. The remaining \$2 million will be spent the same way.

No expenses projected for the FCC mandate at this time and for the revenue update as of January 31, 2020, there is \$1,034,922 that has been collected.

Discussion ensued regarding the tax for phone lines and the FCC mandate and the federal/state relationship regarding the funding as well as relay service. Ms. Shorten also asked about spending authority and its'

restrictions and Ms. Little said that the \$906,780 is the appropriation that MTAP is authorized to spend. If one wants to spend more than the appropriation, Ms. Little is willing to do some research on how the appropriation can be increased. Ms. Hermanson said that the Department of Administrations gives approval and it's called a budget change document that needs to be submitted. Ms. Hermanson also added that it might be a good time to do a state-wide needs assessment.

DPHHS Report: Chanda Hermanson

Ms. Hermanson reported that the division central office is fully staffed and that it's the first time the office has been fully staffed in three years. Work is being done on analyzing what past practices are/were and identifying gaps in internal controls. The previous week, they spent a day with the procurement people doing training on procurement rules and processes and how the Department of Administration is involved, what needs to go on an RFP and what can be sole sourced. The department will be developing division procedures and internal controls, so people understand their roles and the different processes. The processes will be documented. Ms. Hermanson added that the next phase will be meeting with the legal counsel to begin doing an analysis on the Administrative Rules. Another upcoming project will be collaborating with other divisions within the DPHHS on how to serve parents better.

Ms. Hermanson shared that this year is 100 years of the public vocational rehabilitation program and a celebration will probably occur in October which is Disability Employment Awareness month.

Work will be going on in preparation for the next legislative session and the process involves the Legislative Finance Division and they work for the Governor and work for the legislature. They do a report in July and give that to the legislature on anomalies to look at such as the excess money MTAP has. There is a process called the executive planning process and each of the programs put forth what they want to see in the budget and the leadership makes decisions and through that process it gets whittled down and submitted to the Governor's office and his budget staff to decide what actually is put in the House Bill 2. After they decide, then the House Bill 2 goes to committee to question and decide then put out on the floor for a vote. One part of the report that the Legislative Finance Division covers is the full-time employees (FTEs). If there is a need to have an extra employee at MTAP, that must be appropriated as an FTE within the report. Ms. Hermanson said that there is a set number of FTEs for the division and she could repurpose an FTE and give it to MTAP but she's not able to do it currently because FTEs were cut in the last session. But with the upcoming executive planning process, she can mention that MTAP has the funding to support another FTE and "sell" that to her superiors.

Discussion ensued about adding the FTE for MTAP. Mr. Preston made a motion that the committee supports the idea of adding another staff member and Ms. Varnum seconded. Mr. Bibler asked those who are in favor of having staff do an EPP for an FTE and the majority voted in favor.

Hamilton Relay Report: Emilie Banasiak, Asia Johnson and Connie Phelps

Connie Phelps opened with the statistical report:

- For the TRS calls, Hamilton Relay met the 85% that is required by the FCC within 10 seconds, by averaging around 97%.

- For the session minutes there has been a steady decline, with some spikes.
- For the quality scores during the quarter for the centers (Georgia, Louisiana, Maryland and Nebraska) it is at 95%.
- For the typing words per minute average it is 81.7% for all the centers. Typing accuracy is at 98%.
- For the customer care report, for general information there were two calls; wrong number and hang up, there were four in October, seven in November and eight in December.
- For conference captioning minutes, there was a spike in October then it dropped a little in November and December.
- For CapTel calls, the percentage answered in 10 seconds is normally at 100%
- For CapTel session minutes and conversation minutes, there has been a drop from people migrating from landline only to the IP caption option. In December of 2019 it was around 2,000 for session minutes.
- For CapTel quality scores, the average words per minute is 184 and average rate of accuracy is 99.68% and average rate of error is .32%.
- For CapTel customer care contacts – there was one set up question in November.

Emilie Banasiak reported on outreach highlights from the past contract year such as:

- Women’s Fair at the University of Montana (Missoula),
- Family Learning Weekend at MSDB (Great Falls),
- Montana Association of the Deaf state conference (Great Falls) and
- Last Chance Community Pow Wow (Helena).

She also attended the Montana Speech and Hearing Conference in Billings and did a presentation with Mike Bouchard there. Ms. Banasiak also added that she was at the Montana Youth Transitions conference in Helena.

For upcoming events, some ideas are:

- Montana Gerontology Society conference,
- Veterans Stand Down in Kalispell
- Women 4 Wellness Fair in Pablo
- Family Learning Weekend at MSDB in Great Falls
- ASL Festival in Great Falls

MTAP Equipment Report – Mike Bouchard

Mike Bouchard reported that he is seeing issues with the CapTel 840 + phones and the TTYs because locations are switching from analog to digital. He says some of the clients cannot afford the cost of getting an Internet connection to switch to an internet-capable phone. He mentioned Lifeline but there’s not much assistance for people with low income and it can depend on the phone company that would choose to assist with low-income clients. Mr. Bouchard added that MTAP does distribute iPads and iPhones, but it depends on the disability threshold. Also, with higher end technology, more training might be required depending on the client. He mentioned that he saw in an email from TEDPA that one state partnered with their colleges and allocated so

much money for the college tech department to put on smart device training opportunities for people. Discussion ensued about paying for Internet connections.

Unfinished business

MTAP Subcommittees

The technology and equipment subcommittee are responsible for looking at what is available and if it's good for the user and looking at the Teltex contract for equipment distribution. Almost all the equipment is from Teltex except for the CapTels which come from WCI. Raz Mobility is also another company that is used occasionally for non-Apple products. For the iOS devices – clients can also get technical assistance from Teltex as well. Lisa Cannon (chair), Cam Tulloch, Jim Streeter and Sherri Odlin are on this committee.

The outreach subcommittee is responsible for scoring the RFP and will assist with renaming the tech fair and reaching out to different organizations to publicize the tech fair for May. Tina Shorten(chair), Barb Varnum and John Pavao are on this subcommittee.

New business

Action items – Renew Teltex contract for 1 year

Tina Shorten moved to renew the Teltex contract and Drew Arnot seconded. Motion was passed.

2020 meeting dates:

May 20, 2020 – Tech fair in Browning

May 21, 2020 - Browning

August 20, 2020 – Helena

November 19, 2020 - Helena

The meeting was adjourned at 2:30 pm