MINUTES OF THE
LEGISLATIVE COMMISSION'S
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY SUBCOMMITTEE
MAY 16, 2006

A meeting of the Legislative Commission's Information Technology Subcommittee (pursuant to Nevada Revised Statutes 218.682) was held on Tuesday, May 16, 2006, commencing at 2:10 p.m., in Room 2135 of the Legislative Building, 401 South Carson Street, Carson City, Nevada, with simultaneous video conference to Room 4401 of the Grant Sawyer State Office Building, 555 East Washington Street Las Vegas, Nevada.

SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT IN CARSON CITY:

Senator Dean Rhoads, Chairman
Senator Bob Coffin

SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT IN LAS VEGAS:

Assemblyman Mo Denis, Vice Chair
Assemblyman Harry Mortenson
Assemblywoman Francis Allen

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL BUREAU (LCB) STAFF PRESENT:

Madilyn Zike, Manager, ITS
Eric Dugger, Operations Manager, ITS
Brenda Erdoes, Legislative Counsel
Paul Mouritsen, Manager of Constituent Services Unit, Research Division
Sylvia Wiese, Executive Assistant, Administrative Division, Recording Secretary

The meeting packet containing the agenda and material for the meeting was provided to the subcommittee members and public, and is attached as Exhibit A.

Item I – Opening remarks and introductions.

Ms. Zike introduced herself as the new Manager of Information Technology Services. She came to the LCB from the Division of Child and Family Services where she had been the Information Technology Manager Her goals for the next year are to develop an Information Technology strategic plan; operations and business continuity planning, also known as disaster recovery; and to explore new uses of information technology at the LCB. In addition she reviewed the organizational structure and the services provided by the ITS unit. The Customer Support Services group is responsible for the Help Desk, telephones, training, and prepares user documentation and manuals. The Network Services group is responsible for network operations, administrating the wireless services and computer and other hardware purchasing. The Internet Services group is responsible for maintaining five legislative web sites, the intranet [LegNet] and a number of in-house applications. The Applications Development group is responsible for application programming to support the LCB and the legislative process, and respond to many requests for new functionality in the applications.

Item II – Approval of minutes from the meeting held November 17, 2004.

ASSEMBLYMAN MORTENSON MOVED FOR APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD NOVEMBER 17, 2004. THE MOTION WAS SECONDED BY ASSEMBLYMAN DENIS AND CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

Item III – Report on projects funded by the 2006-2007 appropriation.

Ms. Zike provided a handout outlining projects for fiscal years 2006-2007, which is attached as Exhibit B, and reviewed each item.

Assemblyman Denis inquired if the LCB has a contractor for software licensing and hardware purchases or does it enjoiner the state's contractor. Ms. Zike responded that the LCB participates with the state when appropriate, but not always.

Item IV – Report from the Legislative Counsel Bureau business continuity planning workgroup.

Ms. Zike stated that phase one of the disaster recovery planning is being led by Mr. Dugger. He and his team have been meeting with staff to discuss their business needs regarding data access and replication. The team will be developing recommendations for the subcommittee's consideration and she will keep the members posted as to the progress.

Assemblyman Denis requested a copy of the current disaster recovery plan.

Item V – Proposal to improve the legislator e-mail process.

Mr. Mouritsen provided a handout on a proposal to improve the legislator e-mail process, which is attached as Exhibit C, and reviewed each item.

Responding to Senator Rhoads, Ms. Zike stated that it would not be necessary for legislators to get new e-mail addresses.

Senator Rhoads asked, "If we move to your proposal, and I respond to somebody's e-mail, will my e-mail address show in the reply?" Mr. Mouritsen replied, "Yes".

Assemblyman Denis inquired into developing a way to contact a committee. Mr. Mouritsen recognized that would be possible by having a contact button on each committee's web page.

Assemblyman Denis requested that Mr. Mouritsen contact some of the states who have implemented this system and find out which system has been more successful, and some of the pro's and con's, so that the LCB doesn't have to reinvent the whole process. His biggest concern is to do whatever will make it easiest for constituents to communicate with legislators, and avoid methods that are difficult to use.

Mr. Dugger added that with today's technology, it is possible to setup rules and provide redirects at the server level. Also, if a legislator wants to keep their e-mail address on the web page do it as an image rather than a link, which would prevent the spam bots from grabbing it for spam.
Assemblyman Denis stated that some of the legislators may not be aware of all the different options available to them for forwarding e-mail, so staff may want to put something together that explains the kind of things that can be done for them.

Senator Rhoads inquired into the cost of implementing the new system and how long it would take to implement. Ms. Zike responded that it is not costly other than staff time to complete it, and that staff may need to acquire some additional licenses, but she is not sure about that yet. Implementation would take about four to five months. We will develop a project plan for how long each option will take and keep the members updated.

Senator Coffin asked if it would be possible for each legislator to decide which fields would be mandatory and if it can be done on an elective basis. Ms. Zike said yes, and it can be customize however you would like it to be.

SENATOR COFFIN MOTIONED FOR STAFF TO PROCEED WITH THE METHOD DETERMINED BEST TO SHIELD THE LEGISLATOR'S E-MAIL ADDRESSES FROM SPAMMER SEARCH BOTS. ALSO TO DEVELOP THREE OR FOUR CONTACT PAGE DESIGNS FOR EACH LEGISLATOR TO CHOOSE FROM, AND PRESENT THEM TO THE SUBCOMMITTEE. THE MOTION WAS SECONDED BY ASSEMBLYMAN DENIS AND CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

Assemblyman Denis suggested that if it would help speed things along, staff could contact a couple of the members after they have put something together, and the members could review it to see if there are any additional questions or comments before the subcommittee meets again in August.

Senator Rhoads agreed with the suggestion and appointed Assemblyman Dennis and Senator Coffin to review the recommendations.

Assemblyman Mortenson drew attention to the blue list that comes out every month with all of the legislator's names, addresses, phone numbers and so on, and asked if it could also provide the legislator's preferred e-mail address. During the interim most of them use a personal e-mail instead of the legislative e-mail, which they open very infrequently. There are many times that he wants to contact a legislator by e-mail and does not know the best way to do that. Ms. Zike said she would look into it.

Item VI – Legislator laptop strategy for 2007 session.

Ms. Zike stated that new laptops were purchased for the 2005 Session. The recommendation for next session is to keep the current laptops and evaluate the need to upgrade the CPU memory.

Senator Rhoads asked if the legislators who have purchased their laptops would have to pay for the upgrade. Ms. Zike replied she did not know and would check into it. The cost is under $100 for another 512mb, so it is not very expensive.

Assemblyman Denis inquired about the biometric thumbprint option. Mr. Dugger explained the conflict between the VPN software starting up at the same time the biometric finger scanner software is starting up; they interfere with each other. It can still be used after the fact, but only after one is logged in to the VPN. The best solution staff had at the time was to disable the biometric log in, but staff can change yours if you would like to use it.

Assemblyman Denis said he remembers that explanation from last year, but was wondering if the VPN software had been changed to be more compatible with the biometric software. Mr. Dugger replied, "To my knowledge, no, but I can look into it further."

Senator Coffin said, "Sometimes we have gone two years and sometimes we have gone four years before we replace laptops. I would like us to keep an open mind with our next acquisition, because the basic framework we are using is four now years old, even though the computers are only two years old. We had our usual debates last time - I wanted a lightweight laptop and we ended up with the same thing that weighs a lot. Staff has had a hard time with this because the more different computers you have the more difficulties there are in terms of learning how each one works. I would like to see if we could get different lightweight, larger screens or even desk top PC's. They could all be from the same company so they have some common components for repairs. I am still very happy I bought my lightweight Sony. Another reason is to keep IBM/Lenovo on its toes. If we don't get the same service from Lenovo it might also be a signal to them too, that they need to pay better attention to their service."

Mr. Dugger interjected that current IBM machines and service support is coming from US locations. Staff too has had concerns regarding the manufacturing of any new laptops, because they will be built their factory in China. Staff won't look at the past and say that just because we have liked the IBM laptops for the last two, three, four sessions that we still do. Staff will look at the new manufacturer, and decide from there.

Senator Coffin said that in the past he has suggested the LCB purchase PDA's for those legislators who don't want computers. It could be another way of keeping in touch, and would like that to be considered in the future.

Assemblyman Denis agreed and added that, as he sees it, the majority of the times both during session and off-session, the laptops are used for e-mail and perhaps some web browsing. Most legislators are not using them for word processing or spread sheets, so this might be a way to save money and actually provide better service. He would also be interested in knowing what some of the other legislatures around the country are doing.

Mr. Dugger commented that he is currently looking at the Microsoft multi services, so various PDA's, smart phones and other devices can connect to LCB's network services. In fact, he just turned it on last week and has been working with it, so staff is progressing toward that. Because a lot of the new devices are wireless, it is intended to put them on LCB's our wireless network so you can connect.

Senator Rhoads requested that information and options for these devices be gathered and presented at the next meeting. If the subcommittee feels there is something much better, it would be taken it under consideration.

Item VII – Public comment.

There was no public comment.

Item VIII – Future meeting dates and topics to be discussed.

The subcommittee will meet again on Tuesday, August 22, 2006, at 2:00 p.m.

Item IX – Adjournment.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 3:17 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Marilyn Maxfield
Administrative Assistant,
Information Technology Services

Dean A. Rhoads
Senator Dean A. Rhoads, Chair