

MINUTES OF THE
MEETING OF THE LEGISLATIVE COMMISSION'S
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY SUBCOMMITTEE

June 13, 2000

A regular meeting of the Legislative Commission's Information Technology Subcommittee (ITS) (NRS 218.682) was called to order by Bob Coffin, at 3:12 p.m., Tuesday, June 13, 2000, in Room 4100 of the Legislative Building, Carson City, Nevada and was simultaneously video conferenced to the Grant Sawyer Sate Office Building, Room 4412.

SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Senator Bob Coffin, Chairman

Senator Dean A. Rhoads

Assemblyman Lynn Hettrick

Assemblyman Bernie Anderson

Assemblywoman Sandra Tiffany

Assemblywoman Marcia de Braga

Assemblyman Bob Beers

SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT:

Senator William R. O'Donnell

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL BUREAU (LCB) STAFF PRESENT:

Lorne J. Malkiewich, Director

Steven J. Watson, Chief Deputy Director, Administrative Division

Brenda Erdoes, Legislative Counsel

Steve Lang, Programmer/Analyst, Legal Division

Dan Miles, Senate Fiscal Analyst

Jacque Sneddon, Acting Chief Clerk of the Assembly

Monte Walters, Supervisor, Media Services

Allan Smith, Manager, Information Systems (IS)

Mary Jarrett, Communications Technician, Information Systems

Marilyn Maxfield, Administrative Assistant, Information Systems

OTHERS PRESENT:

Don Hataway, Deputy Budget Administrator, Budget Division

Lori Bagwell, Budget Analyst, Budget Division

A packet was provided to the subcommittee members and is attached as Exhibit A.

Item I--Approval of minutes from meeting of November 16, 1999.

ASSEMBLYMAN HETTRICK MOVED FOR APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD NOVEMBER 16, 1998. THE MOTION WAS SECONDED BY ASSEMBLYMAN ANDERSON AND CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

Senator Rhodes inquired:

On that first page of the minutes, in last paragraph it states that we were to receive a cheat-sheet on how to set up a personal address book for our e-mail. Was that sent out?

Senator Coffin said:

I received it, printed it out and I set up my directory with it.

Mr. Smith responded to Senator Rhoads:

We sent it out via e-mail and we can send it again. I'll have to check with Darla Zumbro to see if she sent it to everybody or just the chairman, but the intent was to send it to everybody. I will make sure that you get it.

Senator Coffin stated:

The policy of this subcommittee is to get everything going to everybody at the same time. You'll find us exchanging messages and copying everybody on most of our information, so that way everybody is in the know. Can this personal directory be setup off-line or do you have to be on-line to do it?

Mr. Smith replied:

He can set it up while he is in the building as long as he has his antenna on.

Mr. Coffin said:

Please provide that to Senator Rhoads and anyone else who needs it.

Item II-Report on projects and activities related to the Information Systems' Appropriation.

Mr. Smith

Item 1 - The phone system is complete but for some training.

Item 2 - BASN has some ongoing projects and some staff training is being scheduled.

Item 3 - There are two reapportionment workstations set up, one in Las Vegas in Room 4410 and one here at the LCB in

Room 2142B, for those of you who would like to work with the software. The workstations are Dell computers with 600 MHz. The software is ArcView, autoBound and a lite version called GeoTrack, which has many of the same features, but is much more simplified. The workstation in Las Vegas is loaded with Clark County data only, both the updated 1990 census data and the Tiger files. The workstation in Carson City has the remaining 16 counties loaded.

Mr. Anderson asked:

Just for clarification, the Tiger files are the updated, newest materials from this recent census or from the 1990 census?

Mr. Smith answered:

It is based off the 1990 census and is updated based on some statistics. It is not official census data.

Mr. Anderson asked:

But, does it include any of the census data that has just been gathered, even though it is not official yet?

Mr. Smith replied "No."

Mr. Smith continued

Item 5 - The public kiosk project keeps getting put back because other projects are more pressing. We hope to have something, but I'm not sure we can get to it this Interim. We will be working closely with Media Services to get something running that is a combination of the MATV and the Internet/Intranet, to providing some capability for status and the various functions the public needs.

Mr. Coffin pointed out:

This is something we promised our colleagues we would do, and at this point we should be in the first phase of things. How much longer can we put this off, because it is something of great importance. The chambers have been made smaller and there isn't enough room in the public or press areas for people to see things as they are happening. Is there something we need to know about so we can give you some guidance?

Mr. Smith said:

I will be getting into that later when I talk about plans and ongoing projects, then you will get an idea of what we have been doing, where we are and where we are going. This will be a project that our web staff will work on, along with Media Services.

Through out this interim, we have become a convenient service to the Executive Branch in providing more support and spending a lot of time working on their committee hearings being broadcast on the Internet. They have asked us to put on things like surveys, which involves more than just putting on some data. It has to have interactivity capability. Another project we received from the Governor's Office is putting a list of agencies, commissions and boards on our site. They were hosting it then decided they couldn't keep up with it, so they asked us to do it. So, we are working on that, making it a database, and we will have that on the web soon. Right now, it is out there in a static form.

Mr. Coffin remarked:

It sounds like these are demands on our personnel and that the Executive Branch should possibly provide staff to help us if they don't want to do the job. Is it because they don't have enough people? It has definitely made our web page better having all those links. But on the other hand, if we are doing this on the behest of the Executive Branch, we ought to see if we can get a quid pro quo on some of these things.

Mr. Smith agreed.

That is part of the problem. We are doing this along with our own projects, such as redesigning for better navigation, adding features like Frequently Asked Questions, a site directory and things like that to help people get through our page. We have also improved the search capability. So, there are a lot of other things going on.

Mr. Smith continued:

Item 6 - For the mobile training room we have purchased a number of training videos and materials, and a couple of TV/VCR units for folks who would like to get involved in training on the various Microsoft Office Suite applications. There was a request from this subcommittee to post training materials on the Intranet and we have done that. We plan to buy a projection device so we can have that capability when an instructor is involved.

Item 7 - Upgrades to the Internet and Intranet system are done. We purchased new servers for our Internet and Intranet, they have been stress tested, and they now have the capability to carry us on for quite a while.

Item 8 - The Front Desk upgrade is proceeding on schedule and we plan to deliver the application by August, so they can have it to work with in the months preceding session. We will continue to work closely with the Front Desk staff on various improvement and adjustments.

Mr. Lang provided an update on the projects in Legal Division.

Item 9 - Replacing the indexing system. This project is on track, on target and on budget. We anticipate delivery of the final product in mid-August. The software vendor is working closely with our Indexing Division and is currently working on getting the data out of the old system and formatted properly into the new system. This will help us out for the upcoming session since the existing system is DOS based and none Y2K compliant.

Item 10 - Upgrading/convertting bill drafting, opinions, regulations and other Word 95 applications. This project is completed. We are working now using Office 2000 and VBA enabled products.

Item 11 - Continuing development & upgrades of DraftTrack and Conflicts applications. The final aspect of that will be delivered before the end of this month. It is also on track and on target. The budget went a little over what we had originally anticipated. The reason being instead of just upgrading it in its existing database we went ahead and converted to a more robust, more powerful system that ties in more closely with the Front Desk system. We will be able to exchange data back and forth with strong assurances of security of the information for the Legal Division and still be able to maintain the inter-operability with the Front Desk system. The money to cover this is being drawn from items 12, 13 and 14, which are complete, with no expenditure, and we are doing them in-house with absolutely no expenditures as well.

Item 12 - The modular timecard system was developed in-house. We will be offering it to the other division of the LCB, to see if they would also like to use this time card system.

Item 13 - Codification of NRS was also completed in-house.

Item 14 - For the out-of-office staff tracking system we are using Outlook to do that. Currently it is mostly a manual system, and we hope to update that to a more automated system, also using in-house expertise only with no outside expenditures.

Mr. Coffin asked:

What has been the feed back on the NRS on the CD that was sent to all of us?

Ms. Erdoes answered:

We have had a good response to it so far. We have had anywhere from 6 to 30 people attending the training sessions and have had requests for more training sessions, both down south and in Reno, which we are presently attempting to provide. The best thing about the training sessions is not only do we have a chance to put our products out before the people, but we usually we get some feedback from each one. The users have given us a lot of suggestions. In fact we have a new version in the making right now and will be out soon, that has many of the changes that were suggested by the users. When other people use it differently than we do, they come up with different needs, and we are able to adapt to those. It has worked very well. One of the things we are working on for the next reprint is to make it so that you can have separate data bases so you can search the NRS with or without the annotations. There are an amazing number of people who want to search it without the annotations, and we didn't realize that. We thought we were the only ones who needed that. The response has been tremendous.

Mr. Coffin asked:

When next session is over, how long will it take then to get NRS CD out to the legal community and the members?

Ms. Erdoes answered:

It should be about two months. After session, we have the two-week period we have to wait for the Governor to get everything signed before we can start processing and then it generally takes about a month and a half to get through everything. We will update the CD as soon as we are ready to send the data to the printing office, so we will be cutting quite a bit of time. The CD will be available at the same time the printed copy goes to the printer, then in about six weeks you get the printed copy.

Mr. Coffin said, "That is good news."

Mr. Hettrick inquired:

Do you think this going to facilitate the selling of more copies?

Ms. Erdoes replied:

I believe so. The sales are very much determined by the other products that are also out there. One of the vendors has dropped out which is now giving us a bigger share of the market, but we can't predict who is going to come onboard and who's not. By getting it done and having it out there faster than any other product out there will help with sales.

Item III-Review and make recommendations concerning prototype of committee room dais.

Mr. Walters said:

Media Services has been doing standard operations with video conferencing between Carson City and Las Vegas, committee room setup for public meetings and also working with Information Systems on displays for reapportionment. We are also looking at redoing the lighting and sound systems in the two rooms in Las Vegas, using the same kind of lighting over the dais' and sound systems we have here in the LCB.

Mr. Walters responded to Mr. Beers question, stating that there will be more electrical outlets in the big room. He continued:

We are also working with the software to improve the response time for the voting system in the chambers, so when the legislator's voting it will respond quicker.

Mr. Anderson remarked:

Occasionally in chambers, we see a certain level of games that are played when voting is taking place. My concern is that during this, when people are changing their votes back and forth, that we don't do something to the computer system that is going to cause an additional delay to the Front Desk. Have you tested the system yet, or are you planning on testing it, to see whether it is going to stand up to that behavior that we see exhibited in the chamber's from time to time?

Mr. Walters responded:

Yes. This is one of the reasons we are going back through the original design of the system and cleaning up. This work is being done in-house and we are taking out a lot of stuff that doesn't need to be in there, so it will respond faster and allow you to vote the way you want to.

Mr. Coffin asked:

Is that one of the things that caused our Front Desk staff to issue an extraordinary amount of corrections? Is it a software problem? We received a lot of corrections on votes just last week.

Mr. Smith explained:

No. That was a result of the function of the report writer and some other thing that didn't come out correctly. The reason that was issued last week is because it wasn't until somebody actually looked closely at that report that they found some

incorrect information. The time lag between the time the report was generated and when errors were discovered was just a matter of if somebody finally looking in the right place, at the right time and found something wrong.

Mr. Coffin asked:

Is there any reason why, in the future, we can't have that as a real-time report, that progresses through the session, as opposed to having it come down sometime later in a hard copy form?

Mr. Smith explained:

That has been a touchy subject. Right now, the votes are shown as part of the bill history, so you have to go to the individual bill to see what the votes were, and that is shown as soon as the votes are available.

Mr. Coffin stated:

It may be touchy with some people, but this subcommittee has asked for greater public access, which to us, includes the votes. One has to be a bit savvy on how the system works to find the votes. A mistake could be caught earlier if we could call up your voting record for the past week, by bill or however you want it. This falls in line with the lobbyist list. It seems like some things that go on paper really should have been digitally encoded the first time they were created, so we don't have to create a hard copy. You could do that for public consumption, and libraries and other reasons too, later on down the line. Can some of the members of the commission who are here tell us why there might be some resistance? I didn't know of any committee action that has been taken that would keep this from happening.

Mr. Anderson interjected:

I am trying to understand what you are talking about. Are you saying that when a vote is taken in the Chamber's, I can't ask the system what the vote was from the Front Desk? Isn't that information currently available to the public? If they are paying attention, can't they call that up and see how their assemblyman voted?

Mr. Smith responded:

Yes, sir. They need to go to that bill on the web site, and it is under the bill status. It is almost immediate. As soon as the Front Desk posts that vote, it then becomes available. They can see how the Assembly voted on a bill by going to the bill status page.

Mr. Anderson commented:

With that being the case, why aren't we able to get that up? Is that what you are talking about Senator?

Mr. Coffin said:

You bet. It seems to me that we ought to have on our page a place to click to find out immediately how people voted on a bill. I don't know who has the answer or why we can't get that done. This would benefit us as well as the public.

Mr. Smith reiterated, "You can check on how they voted on a bill."

Mr. Coffin emphasized:

But you have to go through a lot of clicking; you can't go there directly. There isn't a line item on our web page to click on for legislators' votes.

Mr. Smith stated:

It is certainly something we can address, given direction. There isn't any reason we couldn't have it set up so that there is a button or link on the session information page that takes you to the votes. Then you could enter a bill number and it would show you the votes on that bill.

Mr. Coffin suggested:

You could include caveats that this is an unofficial vote total until audited, as we always do.

Mr. Malkiewicz added:

We have already taken the big step which was putting in the final passages. The rest is just how we organize the information. We could have a link for votes on final passage of bills, then enter the bill number and go directly go to that page. As you were speaking, I went on-line to make sure I could pull up a bill from last session and can confirm the votes are showing - all the people who voted in favor or against or were excused on a bill. As indicated, right how you have to go to the bill, but there is no reason why we can't link to these pages from a separate source. Someone mentioned checking what votes were taken that day. We do have some information that we could show by day, such as bills introduced that day, bills passed, bills referred to committee, action and where there is final passage, and we could certainly show the votes. Again, It is just a case of organizing the data in a manner that you want. I don't know of any reason we can't do this. There is no one saying don't to do this. We have already made the major step, which was, and I think it was one of the things you suggested last session, to put these votes out there, so someone could see, almost instantaneously, what they were.

There was some hesitation in the past about putting votes out almost instantaneously. There was a concern that if you have bills that are heading toward deadlines that are going to die if they don't make the deadline, people will be watching the vote in the other house via the Internet to see if something was going to go through. There was a little concern about that, but I think that was the only concern, and we just decided people could still do that if they wanted without the computer, and the information is public, so we put it on the Internet.

Mr. Coffin said:

I don't see a downside to making it available. A person could keep a score on their screen and constantly update it, depending on the bill they want to know the results on. I don't foresee anything more unusual than the game playing, if you will, that has been going on for the last 140 years of statehood on these things. It has always been that way. They just had someone running back and forth to tell you.

Mr. Hettrick included:

I used the video link we had last time and could actually sit and watch the Senate Chambers vote on various bills. As we got down to the end, we were curious what bills were passing over there and we were still on the floor in the Assembly. That was an internal capability, and we are looking at some of that for the future for outbound video, and that might help.

If we do go to on-line voting, and it is there almost instantaneous, we should tie that to something that shows whether or not the bill has been amended. Often you will have a constituent who calls you asks that you please don't vote for bill xyz, and you assure them that you don't like the bill the way it is and you have no intention voting for it. Then the bill gets amended, and you vote for it. The constituent is looking at the Internet and up comes the vote that says you voted for it. If it doesn't show that it was amended, you are apt to get a lot of nasty e-mails and phone calls. If you are going to put the votes up that quickly, it needs to show if it has been amended, and that would alleviate at least ninety-percent of the problems.

Mr. Smith pointed out:

At this point in time we do show the versions, so if they are on the bill status page, they can see what version was voted on.

Mr. Hettrick explained:

I'm thinking more in terms of some kind of summary, where they can do a single click and it would show a listing by legislators and bill numbers, and that is where I would want the amended comment to show. I agree, If they are already good enough to get to the status page and are looking at versions, they would see that. But some of these bills are 100

pages long and the constituent is not apt to read through it all to see that the language got changed, so I would like to make sure that there is something that indicates it was amended, that would at least belay their fears. You may still have voted against them in the end for some reason, when you saw the language. Who knows? But we ought to provide as much information as we can, if we are going to give some kind of summary. I'm not talking about the same thing that is already there, so we are talking about two different thing if we go to a summary.

Mr. Coffin added:

Why I bring it up is that the press isn't interested in every bill and sometimes it is understaffed and it will report on how votes occurred. That is the only way for the general public to know, which is a day later and sometimes they just don't report everybody's vote on an important issue.

Mr. Anderson commented:

We do carry the version number when we are voting, yet in the final report document doesn't say that this is the third, fourth or sixth version, it merely lists it under the original bill number. So it doesn't even show in the document book. Even the way we report it currently, you have to read back through the bill history and it takes a very knowledgeable person to realize that amendments have been coming along, as you well know, from going to any of the conference committees. Sometimes you are dealing with the fourth or fifth version of a bill and half the conference members show up with the second version. I think we are asking for something that is going to be helpful to us and the public. It isn't going to alleviate the problem of misreporting votes as they come along. I'm more concerned that information we have, that has been finalized from the Front Desk's, is as accurate as possible, and that the public has access to that as quickly as possible. I think that is the most we can hope for and I don't think that kind of information should be secret.

Mr. Coffin concluded:

It is not secret now. It just needed to be made easier for people to find. And again, you could include a preparatory paragraph outlining the pitfalls of totaling relying on the data they see. It could state something like 'This is as reported and this bill may be significantly different from one that you may have had in mind, and that one should always read the complete bill text, which is available, with the amendments'. A bill could have been on tow trucks in the beginning and then child molestation at the end.

Mr. Smith suggested:

If you would like, we could show a mini history leading up to the vote, so they could see what has happened to that bill, and then show the current version that is being voted on.

Mr. Coffin agreed that could be useful to the press too.

Mr. Walters continued on Item III.

There is a new mockup of the dais here today that we would like you to take a look at, for placement of the buttons, microphones and over all redesign.

Mr. Anderson expressed:

I would like to thank Mr. Walters for spending time with me today reviewing some of my concerns relative to the setup in the Judiciary committee room and the proposed settings for the new dais'. Both of these design's looks like they would work very well, and the staff needs to be commended.

Mr. Coffin asked:

How easy is it going to be to reach the buttons? Are you saying they are within arms length? Could we accidentally set it off with our knee?

Mr. Walters replied:

You need to come up at them. We took all of that into account.

Item IV-Review and make recommendations concerning the Budget Division's (NEBS) project.

Mr. Miles provided some background on the project.

Back on May 24 I sent a memorandum to Perry Comeaux at the State Budget Office with a number off questions concerning the interface that NEBS and BASN are going to have this next session. I then learned there was going to be this subcommittee meeting and I hadn't received a response, but I wanted to get this on the agenda. One of the issues we were discussing with the Budget Division has to do with the electronic version of the Executive Budget that resides on the laptops for the money committee members. If there was going to be a change or any impact there, you should know about it.

In your packet under Item IV is a copy of the memorandum I sent over and then there is a copy of a response we received from Mr. Comeaux. I will go through some of these items and indicate what our issue was and their response.

The Executive Budget Document Format - There was some discussion in the Executive Branch earlier this year about changing from a Word document, which is currently on the laptops, to some other kind of a document, perhaps arranged by a COBOL program, or something like that. We were concerned that if that were to take place we would need, very early, on an example of a test file, so we could bring it up on the laptops and see to see how it was going to appear.

Mr. Comeaux's response indicates that, at least this time out, they are not going to change from the Word document file that we used last session. That being the case, the transition from a digital file onto the laptops, into the PaperMaster software, should occur just as it did last session, which went very smoothly. It takes a couple of days to do because it needs to be indexed, but from our point of view it was a very smooth transition. So that issue has been resolved.

By the way, Don Hataway and Lori Bagwell from the Budget Division are here and if I should say anything wrong they will jump up and let you know.

The other issues are more technical or mechanical issues in dealing with the interface between NEBS and BASN. In the case of sources of funds, all of the sources of funds are identified as to what kinds of funds they are, whether they are a general fund, a highway fund, a federal fund or some kind of other funds. The NEBS system has a slightly different configuration. We asked how they are going to download this to us and they indicated that they are going to default to our identifier codes, so that it should not be a problem. As far as we are concerned, that is resolved.

The Budget Division has decided that this time they are going to use what is called Decision Unit M-150. The M decision units are generally maintenance decision units. They are going to use M-150 to record all the adjustments to the base budget. As we understand it, what they are going to do is load the base budget, as it exists before adjustments, into their system and then make their adjustments in M-150. BASN is not setup that way, in that BASN deals with an adjusted base budget, maintenance and decision units, and then enhancement decision units. We asked early on if they could roll M-150 after they completed it into the base, so we could get an adjusted base. Mr. Comeaux's memorandum indicates they can do that and we could plan on that. Maybe at sometime in the future when we have time and money to adjust BASN, we may decide that this a good idea and plan to go with them on putting the adjustment into a decision unit, but for the time being they will roll that together. So you will see a budget pretty much as it looked last time in terms of the base and then the decision units.

Mr. Coffin said:

Are you reassuring us that we will be able to follow the previous budget, and the work program, and the new budget as the Governor recommended, without having to adjust in the form of highlights? We would hate to have you have to continue each evening preparing highlights which indicate caution that M-150 is a little different and it contains these items from the previous budget. That is a danger and you get into mistakes and we have a lot of unnecessary questions that way.

Mr. Miles explained:

What has happened for the last two sessions is that in the last part of November thru December, our staff works very closely with the Budget Division and we examine the adjustments they are making to the base budget to make sure we agree. The last couple of session, we have basically been able to agree on 75 or 80 percent of the budget accounts. We agree with the adjustments they have made and in those instances that we don't agree, we then bring those to the attention of the money committees, if necessary. I expect the process next session will be very much the same as the process last session. The committee members really shouldn't see any change.

Mr. Coffin expressed:

Those of you not on the money committees you may not appreciate all the work staff does each night before the next days meeting. They burn the midnight oil getting us ready for that next days meeting. The information they put together is critical. They present it to us so that we don't spend seven or eight hours a day, verses the three or four hours a day, on the budget process. That is why this is on the agenda and why it is critical for us.

On the redo, as it moves along it has an impact on our laptop selection because as it stands now, the budget fits on the screen. It did not fit very well in 1997. We had to make either the page too small you couldn't read it or you had to scroll back and forth and up and down to review the whole page. We need to know what we will be getting from the budget office and will it fit on a 13 or 14 inch screen?

Mr. Miles agreed.

That is a good question. We do know that it fits on the 14-inch screen we used last session. As for a 13-inch, I can't answer that question, not knowing exactly how the PaperMaster software works, and whether it can be shrunk to a 13-inch size or if we would be back to scrolling.

Mr. Coffin asked Mr. Smith if the computers he is looking at will have additional pixels in the screens to be able to read more clearly a smaller type?

Mr. Smith replied:

Most of the laptops we will be showing you have standard XGA style screens, which is what you have now, which is a 1028x760. As far as improvements are concerned, the technology hasn't changed a whole lot for displays. They are crisper from the standpoint of brightness. We are looking at whether you want to go with the same size screen or something smaller to alleviate some weight.

Mr. Coffin continued:

We saw areas where it could have been shrunk a little more, some air taken out between some of the columns, that might make it fit on a 13-inch screen. If we can get a smaller computer, it will be a lot lighter, would use less power, and would have a longer battery. We have a lot of benefits to having a slightly smaller screen, if we can read it more clearly than we can now.

Mr. Smith explained:

As far as doing anything to that document that would have to be something Mr. Miles crew and Lynne Ballatore could work out, if in fact it is a practical solution.

Mr. Anderson called attention to:

One of the points Mr. Smith made a few minutes ago, was relative to the increased demand the Executive Division has made upon us. You mentioned the fact that we are keeping track of several of their committees and conferences, in terms of tracking of those events. Didn't we include an enhancement in the Executive Budget last session for their computer time and to do the very things that we are now doing?

Mr. Miles replied:

I am familiar with the NEBS budget system and the Executive Budget. Two sessions ago, out of the 1997 session, we gave them addition funds to purchase the BASN system. They installed it over there and then made some modification to it. They have in their budget every year money to maintain that system and do whatever upgrades or enhancements they need to do.

Mr. Anderson continued:

The next question deals more specifically with the response we received from Mr. Comeaux about the M-150 Unit saying they will not be sending you agency requests, 'However, we will only roll the Governor Recommended fields, not Agency Requests'. Have you received the agency requests in the past, or is this some kind of thing where they always try to come in the back door after the Governor is sent over?

Mr. Miles

No. In the past all the adjustments to the base budget were made in the base budget. M-150 is a new concept that the Budget Division is going to employ this time, so they can isolate all the adjustments. The budget director is required to report to the legislature the adjusted base budget. I believe they are going to use a printout of M-150 as their report this time. It helps automates their side of it.

Mr. Anderson asked:

Did you have the agency requests in front of you in previous sessions before the automated programs came along?

Mr. Miles replied, "We have the agencies request in hard copy."

Mr. Anderson continued:

So now the agencies are going to have to wait until they get in front of the committee to try to backdoor their way in. I guess I could ask it more politically astute, but that seems to be what happens and I want to find out if we are losing touch with something that the committee had access to in the past.

Mr. Miles replied:

An M-150 is not the new requests for budget resources that agencies might have or how the base budget, which is the actual fiscal year 2000 expenditures, needs to be adjusted to reflect the ongoing budget needs. An examples of an M-150 would be a one time item in the budget that is subtracted out. That is an adjustment that will appear in M-150. There may have been a position that came in half way through the year and the expenses for the position needs to be annualized. That would be an adjustment in M-150. Those are the kind of adjustment we are talking about, not the budget in its entirety.

Mr. Hettrick asked:

Will there be a column for the agency request?

Mr. Miles answered:

If they don't change the format from last time there will be an agency request column. You may want to ask the Budget Division to confirm that.

Mr. Coffin commented:

Every governor has had a different policy and style to approach it. In this particular case, Governor Guinn has been extremely worried about the growth of the budgets without the revenue to be able to support them, so he told all the agencies 'Don't give me an increased budget'. Now, I don't know whether that means that the budget requests will be just what they asked for last time or if it will be the budgeted request. We need to know what policies are being implemented. We have had some confrontations in past with governors who didn't want us to know what the agency really wanted. It goes back and forth and I'm sure this one won't be any different. Governor Guinn has promised that he would work with us a lot closer, a lot earlier than previous governors and I am going to hold him to that.

I would like to invite Don Hataway, of the Budget Division, up to comment on that.

Mr. Hataway explained:

In the past, agency requests have been included in the Executive Budget that is sent to you. By statute, the Executive Budget is the governor's recommendation for the next biennium. Budget Division staff has made a recommendation to the governor that the agency requests not be included in the Executive Budget, however that decision has not been made yet, so I really don't know what the final outcome will be. However, we have also made a recommendation that the money committees receive copies of all the agency requests that come in. We are not attempting to keep any information from you, but the Executive Budget really is the governor's recommended spending plan and the necessary resources to support that plan for the next biennium, which the money committees then review and make a final decision on.

Mr. Coffin expressed:

Well, that is the rub then, because we like to know what the agency has asked for. Everybody knows now from reading that they have been told to not to ask for more. On the other hand, common sense tells us that even though they don't ask for more they have needed more for sometime, whether it is growth driven or unforeseen circumstances.

Mr. Hataway said:

There is always more need than money available; that will be nothing new. The final budget instructions to the agencies will be given by the governor within the week, which will basically say that there will be no enhancements allowed in the agency requests that cannot be supported by savings within the existing budget. That will definitely reduce the amount of the requests from the agencies. We are concerned that when you take into consideration the projection of the additional resources available, which will definitely be better than what we were dealing with two years ago, we always deal with a finite amount of resources. When you take into consideration the case load driven growth of K-12, university, prison population, Medicaid clients, cost of living increases, etcetera, that the governor is looking at, there really isn't a lot for many enhancements. So why take the agencies productive time to build in enormous wish lists that we know we can't fund in the first place, and then we have to reduce it or eliminate it out of the agency request to ultimately get to the balanced budget we submit to you. There are a number of adjustments on the table that we are looking at and we'll see what the outcome is.

Mr. Coffin asked:

Will we see some of that information in some of the enhancement requests?

Mr. Hataway answered:

If there are no resources, you aren't going to see any enhancement requests of a major nature. But we also know that there are certain mission critical issues that the agencies have to be funded for. We will address those if the resources are there and make a recommendation to you for consideration.

Mr. Coffin said:

I think everything you have said the Governor has said publicly. At the summit a month and a half ago, which I attended, the Governor expressed the desire to bring the Legislature into the budget session a lot earlier than in the past.

Mr. Hataway confirmed:

I haven't said anything different today than the Governor has not been saying for the last six months.

There is a meeting in July to meet with the leadership of the Legislature. Dan Miles and Mark Stevens have also been invited to attend. The interim committees are struggling to get their recommendations completed in a timely fashion so we can address any critical recommendation that you are making. But since we are going through a new process I really don't have any experience to give to you on how all that will interface.

Mr. Coffin explained:

For the subcommittees edification, it doesn't matter what party you are in, governors do tend to hold this stuff close to the vest and they also tend to instruct their agency people not talk to legislators, and yet they manage to find a way to get to us. It is a mysterious process, but it seems to work.

Mr. Hettrick agreed.

Ultimately it is the governors budget and as long as we receive the agency requests it gives us some feel for where they think programs need to go, or whether they see a need for something that otherwise we might not know exists. Most agencies tend to come here anyway and testify that they would have liked to put in a request for more dollars for some program, so I don't think we miss much. But it is helpful to have an idea where they think their issues lie. It is helpful for us to see that an agency doesn't have a request that is significantly different or doesn't ask for enhancements, because this also tells us where we don't need to put money, even when a legislator might feel there is a need.

Given that as a segue, I would like to ask a question that is pointed out in Mr. Miles communication to Mr. Comeaux. In the past the file containing the budget was a Word file and was loaded into the PaperMaster program that we use.

PaperMaster is a very powerful program that provides some tremendous capability for the legislators to be able to mark up a budget and make notes. So when you go from the Ways and Means Committee to the floor, or another other meeting, you open the computer and there are all your notes on that line item, without having to flip through a book. For me in particular, it was very difficult when I had three binders and had to flip each and move back and forth from agency to agency and hold down pages and mark things. It is so much easier to do on the computer and always have it there. Mr. Smith was kind enough to put PaperMaster on for the bills as well, which was an even bigger boon, because while on the floor, I would get a budget bills, but the bills that were passed in a committee would go back and forth and get amended, then you get to the floor and your bill book is up in the room and you don't know what you asked for on that bill, you don't remember how you voted on that bill, and you don't have anything. But with the computer, you can turn PaperMaster on, and bingo, up come all your notes, everything is there in front of you. I think that is a very powerful system that ultimately helps legislators and if they end up using it, they will do a better job. I would hate to see us go away from a system that would not allow the use of PaperMaster. I think it would be a mistake, unless we are going to create something like it ourselves.

I'm no longer active in programming as I once was, but it seems to me that COBOL is a language of the past, not a language of the future. Maybe it is easy to program in, but I am concerned that we don't move away from capabilities that allow us some real computer power.

Mr. Coffin pointed out:

Mr. Comeaux's answer was very clear; we are not going there.

Mr. Hataway offered:

At some point, we would be very happy to make a presentation on the enhancements we have made in NEBS. We are several generations beyond what we inherited from you. It has been enhanced to increase the efficiency and productivity of the agency requests. We haven't gotten to what our proposals might be for enhancing NEBS for the next budget. If we do purpose something and you approve it, then you need to budget for them to make sure that BASN is compatible also. Mr. Hettrick, we definitely will not do anything that would cause us not to be able to download to the legislature in whatever format you want.

Senator Coffin thanked Mr. Hataway for his comments.

Mr. Miles continued:

One of the enhancements we know they have made in their system is something called notes and schedules that have to do with the agency request into the NEBS systems. They are automating at least parts of that. Since our system doesn't have that capability, we want to make sure we get a hard copy and that they require the agencies to provide them. As I understand it, these are spreadsheets with changes that go into the governor recommend phase, and we need to get those as well. They have indicated in the memo that those will be Excel spread sheets and they can be downloaded.

Mr. Anderson Asked:

Have we budgeted to cover that upgrade?

Mr. Miles replied:

We don't need anything additional. We already have Excel and they would just give us Excel files. I mentioned it because it is not part of our BASN system, but it is part of their budgeting system.

We also asked them for a detailed listing of all the program changes they've made since BASN had been handed to them, four years ago now. They indicated that they don't have a complete listing, but they were fairly confident that our consultants and IS staff had picked up all the changes. That may be true, although we did find one not too long ago, where they had made a change that we weren't aware of. As we receive test data from the Budget Division, we will test out all those functions to make sure we get the same answers they did. We will be able to prove the system, so I'm not as concerned about that at this point in time. What we do need from them is some indication of important dates like - when they might be able to give us these test files, so we can get our contractor onboard. Our contractor is asking us for advanced information on what the schedule look like so they can plan their schedules. So, we will be talking to the Budget Division to see if they can give us a clue as to when that might occur.

Mr. Hettrick asked for clarification:

Originally we handed BASN to them, and they have been modifying it, and now it is called NEBS. But originally it was the same BASN program we had. Is that correct?

Mr. Miles said, "That is correct."

Mr. Hettrick continued:

The Executive Branch has been modifying that code; they haven't gone to a new program, they have just been modifying the existing code?

Mr. Miles replied, "That is correct."

Mr. Hettrick asked:

So is there a reason why they can't hand the code back to us, just like we handed it to them?

Mr. Miles responded:

They have promised to do that, and in fact, that is what has been occurring. But we then have to give that code to a consultant, and pay them to review the code to find what changes were made that don't match up with existing data.

Mr. Hettrick asked:

Why can't we just load it?

Mr. Miles stated:

I can't answer that; perhaps because they use a different software database. We use SQL Server and they use Oracle.

Mr. Hettrick asked:

So the problem is in the database, not in the code itself?

Mr. Miles explained:

There are two main things we are concerned about:

1. The database - what it looks like, what the fields look like and what is contained in them.
2. The calculations, particularly in the payroll piece, and how to calculate the cost of a position.

We would like them to not change any of those until they consult with us. Likewise, we wouldn't change anything unless we consulted them to make sure we can keep those married-up in the future. Mr. Comeaux's memo indicates that as far as payroll calculations go they are willing to do that, but it doesn't go on to say anything about the database itself.

We can't just load their software. BASN, the full name being the Budget Analysis System of Nevada, was designed to take the governor's budget and analyze it, and provide all kinds of features like the highlights and the closing committee reports, where we go head-to-head between two committees and resolve the differences. All that comes right out of BASN.

Because BASN included how to calculate the cost of a position and other functionality issues the Budget Office kept it the same, at least for the time being. Then they became concerned with how to build a budget using NEBS, taking it a step further as a budget building system. NEBS is a budget building system, and BASN is a budget analyzing system, so there is a basic difference in the missions of these two systems. What occurs is we take a position and calculate it, and they take a position and calculate it, and we need to get exactly the same answer.

Mr. Hettrick persisted:

If this is essentially the same code, it is written in the same language and it was the same base code when it started, why can't we run subroutines that are incorporated to do things like payroll calculations? A subroutine that just goes out and does the calculation, rather than changing the way we access the database. Which database are we going to use? Why can't we just trade something that does subroutines so the answers are always the same? I don't understand this.

Mr. Miles replied:

In 1994 when we built the BASN system, there was no thought of turning it over or asking the Executive branch to use the same code, because we were building a budget analysis system. I can't answer the technical questions. I know our system uses something called PowerBuilder, but I don't know what their system uses.

Mr. Beers interjected:

I can address some of this. When they originally did the programming, it was all done within the program. Now, part of it is in the program and part of it are procedures stored within the database itself. One system uses Microsoft SQL and the other system uses Oracle that has different formatting for those stored procedures. So it's not just the code anymore, the database actually has some specific smarts built into it by the programmers, which becomes another source of incompatibility.

Mr. Miles continued:

The last item is the service agreement, which really isn't a service agreement. It is an agreement between the two agencies stating that the databases and calculations will not change without a mutual understanding. Mr. Comeaux's memo indicates that as far as the calculations go, they would agree to it, though at this point, they don't want to sign the agreement.

Just one final comment, the response we got from the Budget Division is very positive and we are pleased with it.

Mr. Coffin concluded:

We have a promise from the Governor to work with us earlier, and we can only hope he holds to that, for it would allow us to work out any difficulties that might surface. We don't want to take away flexibility for the Budget Office in trying to make changes that help them build a better budget, as long as the LCB is informed of the changes.

For the benefit of the members of this subcommittee who are not on the budget committee, most of us on the budget committee are aware that LCB staff works closely with the budget office, and are sworn to secrecy. They know almost everything that is in that governor's budget, and keep it to themselves as part of the agreement. All we would be told is that there are some fundamental differences of opinion. There is a trust between the two branches that we hope can continue.

Item V-Review and select legislators' laptops for 71st Legislative Session.

Mr. Smith said:

We have prepared a survey to the legislators so we can get an idea of their needs, usage and training regarding laptops.

Mr. Coffin interjected:

It is too early to tell what we need to be sending out. How long do you anticipate before we need to make this decision?

Mr. Smith replied:

I was not anticipating that you would make a decision today. As for the equipment, I want to present some ideas to you to get your feed back and also give you a chance to look at what is available, so when we meet the next time you would be ready to make a decision or provide feedback on something else you have in mind.

Mr. Coffin said:

We have talked about this and I have sent e-mail to the subcommittee about the idea of having two laptops to choose from verses one to fit all. Those who just want to use e-mail and the Internet might have a different machine than those who need additional capabilities. Is that fair enough to say, that we have two here? Out of the six you have outlined for us, are there two you would recommend?

Mr. Smith answered:

As an industry standard, the total number of laptops the legislature purchases, 70 to 100, is somewhat low. In ordering as many as we can of the same computer, we are eligible for some cost savings. If we order smaller quantities of two different machines, even though one may be less expensive, overall there would be less of a savings.

Out of this group listed the one that stands out is the ThinkPad 570. At four pounds it has the ultraBase, which includes the CD-ROM and some other features that you don't necessarily need to carry around during the day. If you wanted to carry the ultraBase it would be closer to 7 pounds, which is heavier than what you have right now. The Dell Latitude that is about 4.5 pound and it requires additional external items that would add to the weight. When you swap weight for functionality, you lose something.

If you make a decision to speak for the entire legislature, as far as who gets which machine, how many do we order of each and for whom? And then there are elections and it all changes. We can get into some interesting dilemmas if we have two.

Mr. Coffin asked, "What is the time line for making a decision?"

Mr. Smith replied, "We need to make that decision sometime in August."

Mr. Coffin queried:

What about after the first week of September?

Mr. Malkiewich explained:

We have just about all of August. The Legislative Commission will appoint its budget subcommittee at its meeting next Tuesday. We will not have the final numbers from Fiscal 2000 until mid to late July, then we will be putting together our budget in early August and taking it to the budget subcommittee something in September. This subcommittee should meet in August to discuss the potential information technology appropriation needs of the legislature for next session. Early September would work, but that would pinch the other two meetings, because we would have to have both the budget subcommittee and the commission meet in September after this subcommittee met.

Mr. Coffin expressed:

We need to do some thinking on this. This will be our third session with these machines. We need to give staff some

guidance. Let's have some open discussion from members of the subcommittee. Is a six gigabit hard drive just fine, as opposed to going to a nine or twelve? Does stacking of hard drive discs cause it to slow down, which slows down the exchange?

Mr. Beers said, "Probably not."

I'm not a hardware expert, I am more of a software guy, but I would like to throw this out for consideration. Reapportionment data is voluminous and if we are going to have the reapportionment software on every one of our laptops that will require some horsepower - more than we have now.

Mr. Coffin commented:

How many of the 63 members will want or use it? There weren't many in the past.

Mr. Beers said:

I don't know. In my opinion I would swap the opportunity for a new hard drive for the 10Mb wireless LAN, in a heartbeat.

Mr. Coffin asked, "So you really want a bigger machine?"

Mr. Beers emphasized:

I want a bigger pipeline to the Internet, which is what our wireless connection is. We currently have a 2mb version of that. One of the long term planning items is to have a 5-times faster Internet connection by upgrading the LAN inside the building, which would give us the comparable speed to what you would experience if you were plugged into the network in your office, accessing the Internet off of a fast connection. My vote would be to upgrade the LAN.

Ms. Tiffany agreed:

I don't think we need another computer, I agree that we need the band width. There isn't any reason we need to upgrade this machine. I don't know of a financial reason to do it, plus the fact that most of us are just getting comfortable with this computer. I say keep it another legislative session and put the money into the band width and the network.

Mr. Beers added:

The speed bottleneck is not the processor. It's the connection. The size of the hard drive is another issue and I don't think even staff knows how close any of them came to filling it up. I didn't come close to filling up mine, but then I brought another computer from home last session and put most of my other stuff on it.

Mr. Hettrick agreed:

I just looked at mine and right now it's only 5 percent used on a 2-gigabit hard drive; that's almost nothing. I don't think we need a lot bigger hard drive and I don't have a problem keeping the same computer. However, after using this computer for a while it is not my favorite. I don't care for the touch pad at all or the track thing. I have a mouse and prefer that by far. I do like the 14 inch screen and clarity of this is good, and the speed is adequate. I too would vote for the LAN upgrade and get faster access on the servers. That would serve us far better. Other than that, I don't have a problem sticking with what we have.

Regarding multiple types of computers, I understand the rationale for that, but we need to remember that for those who don't keep them, the computer goes on to somebody else who will want full capability in a computer. They won't want just an Internet web device, which is part of what we were trying to do. We lease them for the period of time we use them, then they get passed on to somebody else who needed them. I can't see us ordering a downgraded computer for part of the people. We have to stick with full capability computers.

Mr. Coffin asked:

What if most of your data is on your machine and you want to be able to manipulate the data within your machine?

Mr. Hettrick responded:

Then they should upgrade these, because that is relatively inexpensive to do and it would certainly be cheaper than buying new computers.

Mr. Smith said, "I will have to find out whether or not these processors can be upgraded." [They can not be upgraded.]

Mr. Beers said:

My experience has been that the relationship between the processor and all the other components of the machine is highly engineered and you are ahead a great deal of grief if you buy a new machine rather than upgrade the old machine; sometimes it goes well and sometimes it doesn't. Unless it is specifically designed to have a processor upgrade, which most are not, considering that the processors out there today were not invented when this machine was purchased by the state, you are usually ahead in buying a whole new machine.

I would temper my comments in acknowledgment of Assemblyman Hettrick's comment that there is an underlying motive here of getting a usable piece of technology distributed to other state agencies. We might be able to do one more session on these and then they will be old.

Mr. Coffin questioned, "So they wouldn't be useful to those agencies?"

Mr. Beers expressed, "Not very."

Mr. Anderson emphasized:

The only criticism that I have of this current system is that not all of us had the opportunity to have, for example, PaperMaster that would have been a great enhancement for all of us. What could happen is that in the middle of session, somebody sees that you had the capacity to do something on your computer that they don't have and realized it could be a real tool for them to use and they want it. Then because of two different types of computers, staff is going to say 'I'm sorry, but you didn't order the right flavor of ice cream the first time by, so you can't have it.' They aren't going to be happy campers, and as a result we are going to come out behind. I just want to make sure that everybody has the same capability of getting the material they need and not just a select few. If we don't do that, we are not treating the members correctly in the chambers. We should stick to one full capability laptop. Also, I would prefer to stick with the current system and upgrade what we have.

Mr. Hettrick shed light on:

I need to comment about PaperMaster. When I got it for budgets, I went to Mr. Smith and if we could use it for the bills. He said we probably could and I suggested we try it on my machine. We did and it worked. It wasn't a matter of not letting anybody else have it, but it was just me asking for it.

Regarding upgrades, I agree with Mr. Beers. We should first see about putting in as much RAM as this motherboard is intended to take, for the very reasons you spoke about. If it was engineered to take 192 and we are only running 128, we will gain some benefit in some applications. Also, it might be cheaper still to just replace the whole motherboard than it is to replace all the rest of the hardware. The container doesn't bother me, and I don't think a pound here or a pound there is ultimately going to make much difference.

The biggest single thing that will make them easier to move around in the building is putting a power source at the desks, as asked about on the survey. The hardest part to carry around is the power source. I have to carry the case

around just to carry the power source, so everything all put together - the machine, the power source and the case - is a lot more weight. Again, I personally prefer a mouse; I don't like these tracking devices. Just as I start typing invariably my thumb touches the touch pad, the thing jumps all over, it goes somewhere else, I end up typing someplace I don't want to be, not typing where I wanted to be and I've messed everything up. Then I have to figure out what to do to fix it. I hate that touch pad, but as soon as I plug in the mouse that disables it.

Mr. Coffin pointed out:

I just had mine disabled and that was the end of that, and I haven't used the touch pad since.

I am willing to give up on the idea of having two computers. But to expand this current machine, there is probably a reason why staff has not recommended it. It might be that there have been problems with this machine and/or the service we have received. And I see that Hewlett Packard is not one of the choices this time. If that is the case, we won't want to keep these machines and will want to move to something else.

Ms. Tiffany questioned:

If we are having problems with them, why do we want to pass them to the Executive Branch? If it is a bad machine, we should get rid of them completely. Everyone has exactly the same comments about typing away and the next thing you know you are somewhere and don't know how you got there. Everyone single one of us has experienced that.

Mr. Coffin emphasized:

It isn't a problem if you have it disabled.

Ms. Tiffany asserted:

But the point is that if it has to be disabled then why even have it in the first place. If it's on there and we paid for it, and it is a problem, we shouldn't have it at all. I too have learned work-arounds on everything and have been able to cope with it. But if you are having a problem with equipment, don't pass it onto somebody else.

Mr. Coffin asked Mr. Smith if there have been any fixes and the patches for the problems with the machines?

Mr. Smith replied:

Yes, we have had problems with the hot-swap feature causing a major problem in access to the Windows directory, which ended up in needing to rebuild the hard drive. There is a patch and the only way you could run the patch in was through that procedure. It was a pain.

We did have some service issues with Hewlett Packard. We found that some things we thought were covered in the three-year warranty was only covered for one year. While replacement was available, it was at a cost. But frankly, these laptops have held up quite well, given some of the treatment they have had.

Mr. Coffin said:

Could work with \$3000 to \$3200 as a base price for the laptops? That way Mr. Malkiewich could plug that amount into the budget, and we can have more time to decide which one.

Mr. Smith said that would be OK.

Mr. Anderson suggested:

If this is coming back to us again, would you include a reference to our Hewlett Packard laptop so we can make a comparison of our known commodity to the purposed, and we know where we are going up and where we are going down.

Mr. Coffin added:

Also, include the weight of the power supplies. It would be helpful to have in making a decision.

Mr. Malkiewich said:

What we will discuss at the next commission meeting is the long term planning for what we need to buy between 2001 and 2003, so we can put it in an appropriation and get it in the Executive Budget in a timely manner. Whatever decisions are made for preparing for this session we will go forward with and make those purchases. Ironically, the decisions for this session we have more time on.

Mr. Coffin asked:

You are saying this subcommittee should meet before the budget committee?

Mr. Malkiewich said:

Yes. As far as the other items, even if at the next meeting we couldn't make all the final decisions, that would still be fine. We just need to make those decisions in time for session.

Mr. Coffin

OK. So we will have another meeting in mid to late August, which would give you more time to do some more shopping. At the next meeting we need to have some machines here to look at like we did in '98, preparatory to the '99 session. Can we do that?

Mr. Hettrick added:

Unless we have confirmation that we can go to a screen smaller than 14 inches and still be able to read the budget, I don't feel we can look at a machine that has less than a 14" screen. That will be one of the first things you have to find out, so that would immediately eliminate some machines. The Fujitsu is a contender, so we definitely want to see it, because it has this wonderful ErgoTac pointing and we need to see how badly we like that compared to TouchPads and pencil erasers to see how we feel about that thing. It also has a wireless infrared mouse, which could be very handy.

How much difference is there in Windows 2000 and 2000 Pro compared to Windows 95 and 98, which most of us are using already? The last thing we want to do is pick up a new computer on November 15 or December 1 and have to learn a new operating system in just 60 days before going into a session. I suggest we are careful about buying Windows 2000 or 2000 Pro.

Mr. Coffin asked:

Is it hard to learn? Is it clumsier, better or is it typical Microsoft, where it gets more complicated?

Mr. Smith answered:

I can find out from a colleague in Minnesota. They bought Windows 2000 for all their legislators. There are some differences, and most of them have to do with additional functionality. The look and the feel are virtually the same. The log in is a little different and a few other things. Regardless, we can load Windows 98 on the laptops. Normally the vendors say that it is a Win 2000 Pro, but if we want Windows 98, they can cut the price by \$60 or whatever they deem to be appropriate.

Item VI-Discuss Information Systems' short and long term plans.

A. Approval of changes in data and voice communications/network.

Mr. Smith explained:

The phone system the LCB has in Carson City is compatibly with the other Executive Branch agencies. It is a digital-based phone system, and we have our own server, so we are basically our own in-house phone company. We need the same setup in the Las Vegas office. These changes would allow the Las Vegas office to be a local call to Carson City, and vice versa, providing 30 simultaneous, non-toll lines. Once the 31st call is placed there will be a charge. Another advantage is that on that T1 line we would share the data and voice, so we would be running voice over IP which is the current technology for voice transfer circuits. We would cut about one-third of our cost on the T1 lines between here and Las Vegas. We would also put video conferencing service through it and alleviate some of the problems with that as well, and we would also like to set up local access to the Internet through a private carrier.

We have had discussions with Lucent Technology about these changes, which entails equipment similar to what we have here, and will run around \$90,000.

We are also looking at the possibility of going with a private carrier for our T1 lines because we have had a lot of problems between Sprint and DoIT with our connection to the Internet. I have talked to the deputy director at DoIT about an incident we had a while back and his comments indicated that we did not push hard enough that weekend for a resolution, which turned out to be about a 5-second task for somebody to go in to unplug and plug back in and the system was reset. And I got the feeling that someone was actually in the office part of that time. They charge us for a T1 line we share with the rest of the agencies. We received a call from them a while ago and they said we were using 220k band width; we must be really busy. The equivalent of a T1 line is about 1.5mb of band width and they were complaining when we were using about a third of it. We aren't getting the full band width capability from DoIT that we are paying for. With these changes we will have our own private line and the cost would be cut considerably.

Mr. Anderson asked:

Would calls made from Clark County to the LCB during session be routed through that system down there? Would those lines be used so people calling from Las Vegas don't have to pay? Currently how many lines come up that way?

Mr. Smith responded:

They would call in through the Las Vegas office and would be connected through there.

Ms. Jarrett added:

Currently we have four microwave lines between here and Las Vegas. Our approximate annual costs are as follows:

\$13,404 - To DoIT for four microwave lines between Carson City and Las Vegas.

\$2,880 - To Sprint for microwave lines

\$13,200 - Channel costs to provide ability for the Las Vegas people to dial to Carson City.

\$29,400 - Total microwave charges

\$3,200 - Long distant charges from Las Vegas to Carson City.

\$6,800 - Long distant charges from Carson City office to Las Vegas, during the interim.

This does not include any of the session costs that legislators' pay. We don't know what those charges are because they go directly to you, and don't come through the LCB.

\$9,600 - Line charges to Sprint for the phone lines in the Las Vegas office.

\$49,000 - Current annual total.

Mr. Anderson asked if that is during session?

Ms. Jarrett said, "No. The difference during session and during an interim are about \$15 a month."

The purposed phone system would be two local T1 lines for Las Vegas. The initial start up cost would be \$82,000 to \$90,000, depending on whether or not we purchase the billing system. The annual recurring costs would be approximately \$14,500. This does not include DID charges (dedicated inward dial) which is for the ability to have telephone numbers from Sprint/Centel because those number belong to them. The new system would save the LCB approximately \$34,500 a year.

Mr. Beers interjected:

If we are using almost one-fifth of a T1 line now, then we add voice over IP, that's a pretty high band width. Are you going to need more than one T1 to handle that?

Ms. Jarrett explained:

We have been paying DoIT for a full T1 line for data. We are not filling that now and we feel the full line is not being made available to us. If we go with another company, we would still have a full T1 line and would not be adding much more than 30 phone calls. A one second conversation takes approximately 12k of band width which leaves plenty of room for anyone dialing in from the Las Vegas to access their e-mail or the Internet.

Mr. Smith continued:

As the number of legislators increases in the south, we are looking at the need for local Internet access from our Las Vegas office, so the legislator's could dial in without contending with the traffic going up and down the T1 line like they do now. Presently when you dial up in Las Vegas you hit the server in Las Vegas, get transfer to Carson City, then go out to the Internet. The cost for that would be a T1 line, then about \$1800 per month.

Mr. Coffin asked:

What would the benefits be and how much faster would we hit the Internet?

Mr. Smith replied:

The benefit is that with the reduction of traffic on the T1 line between Carson City and Las Vegas, it would delay the need for a second T1 line to handle additional band width necessary both for voice and data. There would be some advantages in terms of speed, but I can't really give you any kind of measure on that at this point.

Mr. Coffin remarked:

I like the idea of you sharing your thoughts with us. The trouble is though without any backup material it is hard for us to understand what the pluses and minuses are.

Mr. Beers asked:

How many legislators are dialing in down there? How many modems do you have and how busy are they?

Mr. Smith answered:

We currently have eight modems and we have exceeded that two or three times over the last couple of months. When that occurs, they get a busy signal.

Mr. Beers said, "8 X 50 is 400, but are you anticipating some growth?"

Mr. Smith said:

We looked at going to a second board, which would provide another eight lines, or to a board that takes a T1 line, for 24 lines. I doubt we would fill 24, so there is some question at this point whether it is worth it. However, unless we can work out some other means of access for the legislators in Las Vegas that is the direction we would go.

Mr. Beers pointed out:

If you enabled web Outlook, I would think the demand for modems would go down dramatically, just because the growth and the high band width from home and office are going to continue to go up. I haven't dialed into the state for a year because I have a cable modem and web enabled e-mail at work, and I have all my state e-mail going to my work address. If you enable web access in Outlook, I think you would find that we would be better off spending some of that negotiating a lower rate from a high band width DSL or cable modem provider in Las Vegas.

Mr. Smith added:

Another thing we looked at as we are looking at laptops, is that a number of them come with one year free access to the Internet on a standard Internet service providers (ISP). If we did that then legislators would have access from their laptop to an Internet account, and using web enabled Outlook you would be able to get your e-mail and have direct access to the Internet through that carrier. Then it would be up to you to either negotiate a cable or some other form of DSL for higher band width.

Mr. Beers said:

In Las Vegas it ranges from \$10 to \$15 per month for a single person to get a single dial up account.

Mr. Coffin said he pays \$25 for AOL.

Mr. Beers said:

And you get benefits for that and that's your choice. If you are looking for a comparable system to what the LCB offers now, you are talking a \$240 a month, assuming we grow to 24 southern legislators using this system, and they receive \$10 a month to go out and get an ISP. Maintaining that ISP and becoming our own small ISP is something that scales well. It costs about the same amount to maintain 24 lines as it does 240, except for the cost of the phone lines. That may be a better alternative.

Mr. Smith added:

That adds another complexity to this whole issue. If we move in that direction then we would be looking at an additional item on the laptops, as well as how we do e-mail. For those who are not familiar with web enabled e-mail, it would act similar to other free e-mail services like Hotmail and Yahoo. It presents it in HTML format or what looks like a web page. With an AOL account, for example, you could connect to your account at the LCB and retrieve your e-mail without having to dial into the LCB.

Mr. Coffin asked:

Is this something we need to make a decision on?

Mr. Smith answered:

The phone system it is not a budgeted item, so we have to look at whether it qualifies for session funds or needs appropriation funds.

Mr. Anderson expressed:

This is a concern to me. I received several calls during last session from people outside my constituent area, particularly from the south, relative to pending pieces of legislation. They were concerned with what was happening, they didn't have access to a computer, so they want to talk to me personally. I return the phone call and take it out of my telephone fund. It seems to me that this would be an enhancement.

It's not like there isn't money available to cover this particular expense. Since the majority of the people are in the south, we should do this. However, there is still another group of people in the rural areas who also make long distance phone call to the legislature. Are we doing anything to enhance their ability to communicate to us? Mr. Carpenter's constituents need the same kind of access as Ms. Tiffany's.

Mr. Smith said:

At this point we haven't addressed that, but I can look into it. In dealing with the less populated counties this has always been an issue. We can investigate it further, but I'm not sure what we will come up with.

Mr. Smith continued reviewing Item VI-B:

We have been upgrading the server software to Windows 2000 and the hardware to server grade computers, and have replaced six of them. We will be replacing the rest of them over the next year or so.

We have begun addressing the more serious aspects of electronic security. We have locked down access in areas that were a little loose. We will take advantage of Windows 2000's file system which has different topology of files and has more ways to secure the data.

A future project is a document management system that, for security, provides versioning, so we always have a recent version. It would be a check in-check out system, so people will take a copy and not the original, and the original can't move it. It will require logging in so we know who did the last work on a document. There are layers of security so we can share or not share based on the needs of the application or the data. It also allows us to tie data together. I am considering this one of our biggest long term projects.

About 20 machines in the LCB got hit with the 'I love you' virus which did some damage, and we were able to recuperate by the end of that day. We did lose a days worth of capability, primarily with e-mail, and recovered just about all the files that were lost. On our Intranet page is kept current information current on viruses and hoaxes, procedures on what to do about them, information about Norton AntiVirus software and procedures for loading a patch to Outlook that improves security.

B - Report on video encoding meetings for Internet broadcast.

Mr. Smith reported:

This summer we will begin putting video encoder's in all the committee rooms and chambers and in the Las Vegas meeting rooms, so that meetings that are not video conferenced can be broadcast on the Internet.

C. Report on other web site projects.

I mentioned earlier that we have been hosting committee activity and the impact it has had on us. Also, as legal publications are updated, we make the necessary changes on the web. We have been working with Publications to get Gift Shop on line and that is near completion. They are starting out with limited products and will eventually expand.

We have two new web servers. One is almost fully functional, which is the one I mentioned earlier that is running the Windows 200 platform. We are also working on the web page redesign, with the primary purpose of improving navigation, which is the single most feed back we get is that it's hard to get around on our web site. We will be including a site map and we have already improved the search function. We are also adding a frequently asked question page.

We will be improving the bill tracking for lobbyists' and subscribers so they will be able to track bills from a BDR through to its final status. We will be looking at putting the Nevada Law Library online, similar to what is on the CD. Since there is a certain amount of proprietary information there, Legal Division has requested that go on the paid subscriber side.

We will be working on increasing the interlinking of documents, which is currently within a lot of the publications. We intend to go beyond that and link bills to sections of NRS, and link the journals to the bills and so forth. We will be working on adding historical documents and past session data online.

There is a new online product from ESRI that will make is easier for someone to find out who their legislator is by simply entering their street address.

We have been working with the Research Library, adding more of their documents on line. Research has a library database that we will be placing that on the Intranet, thus expanding that capability beyond our current 10 user network license.

We will be working with session manager's committee secretary application, making that an Intranet application.

We will be adopting a programable web technology. A lot of programming is toward web applications, so rather than having a traditional client server type application, it will be web-based, so that it can be accessed with a browser rather than having a special application loaded on your computer.

D. Report on application development projects.

Mr. Smith continued:

We are in the process of putting up a database listing of agencies, boards and commissions, where you can get a list of contacts within the agencies, like you requested at the last meeting. This will be a dynamic document, so as Research updates the information it becomes available.

We are improving the meeting calendaring and scheduling capabilities, providing better tools and functionality for scheduling all the different aspects of a meeting.

We are working with Legal Division to upgrade the legislative video. This is the movie that you take around with you and gets shown for visitors.

Currently Audit Division has to download data from an agency server, to the DoIT server, they run a process to extract the data Audit wants, and then bring it onto their laptops. Every time we use DoIT's server it is very expensive, and the process they use is an antiquated program. We are looking at writing a SQL Server application that would run on our network, and would provide Audit with more flexibility in dealing with the data they need to extract.

We have a long term goal for a document management system that would across over all divisions and the legislature, and provide a tool and methodology for tracking, editing and managing all of our documents, as well as access, both open and limited. It will also provide tools for better linking. The Law Library on the CD is in a form that has become very popular, so we will transpose that over into the web to give the same look and feel.

E. Report on plans for expanded customer support.

Mr. Smith proceeded:

Around the beginning of this year we implemented a plan in IS that we call our division liaison support program, assigning a person to each division and unit. That person is responsible for meeting with their respective division/unit to find out their needs of Information Systems. This has become a very popular program.

We are looking to extend more support to the Las Vegas office with either a part-time or a full time person, because we are adding more equipment and soon there will be more legislators down there.

Mr. Coffin asked:

Is there any reason why we can't have a lobbyist registration system available for next session?

Mr. Smith inquired:

You are talking about the ones that register on-line?

Mr. Coffin said:

For the ones that register here in person and on-line, so that we can maintain a current list.

Mr. Smith said:

It is already done that way, at least for those who register here. Registering on-line is the broken link. What they do right now is receive information from on-line registration and key it back into the database.

Mr. Coffin interjected:

The only thing I get on the lobbyists is every two weeks during session, a new list comes out, and it's clumsy at best and hard to cross reference. I'm thinking of the inefficiency of filling out a paper form and then someone else re-input it into the system, when the initial entry could be done in such a fashion that a document could be exported right to the system, and it would be available on-line.

Mr. Smith clarified:

That's what the lobbyist clerk does, inputs that data, for those who come into the office. Then the lobbyist clerk prepares an electronic version that converted to hypertext and every two weeks it is put on the web. We are looking at a presentation would come directly from the database rather than from a report created from the database. I think what you are wanting is a dynamic document, so when information is entered you can get the most recent data on that lobbyists. This wouldn't difficult, but whether or not we have time to accomplish it before this session, I can promise.

Mr. Coffin agreed that is what he would like to see.

There was no public testimony.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 5:58 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Marilyn Maxfield

Administrative Assistant,

Information Systems

Senator Bob Coffin, Chair