

MINUTES OF THE
MEETING OF THE LEGISLATIVE COMMISSION'S
SUBCOMMITTEE ON COMPUTER APPLICATION
TO THE LEGISLATIVE PROCESS

May 18, 1999

A regular meeting of the Legislative Commission's Subcommittee on Computer Application to the Legislative Process (SCALP) (NRS 218.682) was called to order by Lynn Hettrick, at 3:18 p.m., Tuesday, May 18, 1999, in Room 4100 of the Legislative Building, Carson City, Nevada and was simultaneously video conferenced to the Grant Sawyer State Office Building, Room 4401.

SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Assemblyman Lynn Hettrick, Chairman

Senator Dean A. Rhoads

Senator Bob Coffin

Assemblyman Bernie Anderson

Assemblywoman Sandra Tiffany

Assemblywoman Ellen M. Koivisto

Assemblyman Bob Beers

SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT:

Senator William R. O'Donnell

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL BUREAU (LCB) STAFF PRESENT:

Allan Smith, Manager, Information Systems (IS)

Brian Bunin, Internet Systems, Information Systems

Monte Walters, Supervisor, Media Services

Marilyn Maxfield, Administrative Assistant, Information Systems

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

Item I--Approval of minutes from meeting of November 10, 1998.

ASSEMBLYMAN ANDERSON MOVED FOR APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD NOVEMBER 10, 1998. THE MOTION WAS SECONDED BY ASSEMBLYMAN BEERS AND CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

Item II--Review of past, current and future Information Systems projects.

Mr. Smith reviewed projects and expenditures from the Information Systems Appropriation, SB72 of the 69th session.

Projects for the 2000-2001 interim include:

- The pilot project of real-time recording of committee minutes presently being used in Rooms 3161 and 2144.
- Upgrades to the front desk system.
- Y2K issues.
- Training members on full potential of computer systems.

Senator Rhoads encouraged better communications with the public in Las Vegas to appraise them of the meeting held there.

Mr. Beers suggested a schedule on the web site for just those committee meeting held in Las Vegas.

Mr. Hettrick agreed that something on the web site would work well, would be simple to do and the information would be available immediately after a meeting is scheduled.

Mr. Hettrick continued:

I have not used a budget book or a bill book once this session. You really have to go fast on the computer to keep up with them all at closings, and it can be difficult, but over all, I have found the computer works very well.

Mr. Smith installed for me, and several others, PaperMaster for bills. The advantage to this is that while I am in a committee room, I write notes on my bill book. Then I go to the floor and the bill comes up but my notes are on the book in the committee room. With PaperMaster I make electronic notes on my bills, so when someone asks how I voted on a bill in a committee, it takes about 30 seconds to pull all my notes up on the screen, and it's with me everywhere I go. I don't have to truck a bill book with me. Every member should have PaperMaster available to them.

Senator Coffin said:

When I look at our web site and realize where we were six months ago, we really have come a long way. I can tell a citizen how to get to the web site to find bill information, with amendments, virtually within minutes of its introduction and adoption. That is really something.

I didn't realize PaperMaster had other uses, because it is integrated into the budget system. My experience with PaperMaster is that I'm not able to manipulate it fast enough to get from volume to volume and page to page. Unless I can work it a little better, don't know how I can use it on the budgets next year. It didn't work well for me. Cheat-sheets would have been helpful. You have heard me talk about cheat-sheet for two years now and we still don't have any.

There are still dial-up system problems when we are out-of-town. Isn't there someway to improve that?

I hope we can meet more frequently during the interim and that we can start earlier the next session.

Mr. Smith responded:

We can look into ways to use standard Internet providers who have local numbers in various areas around the country that you could use to access your e-mail and the Internet when you travel.

The setup we have with Senator Rhoads uses the in-state watts line, so that won't work when you are out-of-state.

During the interim we will again have Information Systems staff traveling to our Las Vegas office on a regular basis for the purpose of meeting with legislators and providing time for training and any other issues they have.

Mr. Smith reviewed Exhibit B.

Statistics for RealAudio shows that the highest simultaneous usage was 153 people listening to floor or committee hearings. We are averaging several thousand hits a week on RealAudio. We have received a lot of feedback from our listeners who visit our web site. One received this week came from a fellow who manages a small state office. He was particularly happy about the fact that he didn't have to have someone here all the time. By listening to the hearings, he could determine when he needed to be here, so he saved on travel expenses. He has also saved a lot on overtime by using the subscriber services to track bills. Since we began the opinion pole tallies in April we have registered over 16,500 entries expressing viewpoints on over 500 pieces of legislation.

Mr. Hettrick said:

I am very active on the e-mail system and I answer every one that comes to me, which probably averages well over 100 a day. The response is incredible. People reply back saying that they can't believe I responded to them and it only took five minutes.

Mr. Anderson added:

There was a controversial piece of legislation in the Judiciary Committee, relative to gaming technology, that caused some world-wide concern. My office was getting calls from stock brokers in the east and one of them said that they listened to the Judiciary Committee meetings every day. This gentleman was doing a news report and he tracked that piece of legislation very carefully using our web site. He commented that it was easier to follow activities in the Nevada Legislature than it was to follow his own legislature just down the road in Dover, Delaware. There is also a judge in Battle Mountain, Max Bunch, who listens and we welcome him to the Judiciary Committee every day.

Mr. Smith continued:

AB 321 is the Information Systems Appropriation for the next interim, in the amount of \$874,000. It is primarily for hardware and software and does not include much for anything outside of that. It is considerably less than last session, which was \$1.2 million. AB 321 has three major expenditures:

- •\$225,000 is to upgrade the existing telephone system. While the basic upgrade was paid for by the Executive Branch, we found that security was not at the level we require. Anyone with an administrative account could listen to the voice mail of anybody on the system. We also need the ability to add and remove phones and other features because of the influx of phones before and after session.
- •\$225,000 is for reapportionment hardware and software.
- •Front desk and voting system enhancements and upgrades.

Ms. Tiffany inquired:

How do you know what hardware and software to use before the interim study for reapportionment begins, and why are we doing this ahead of time? I assume Kathy Steinle [Geographical Information Systems (GIS) Specialists] is still here. Are we going to buy a workstation for her and dedicate it to GIS or are you going to look at software that can generically go onto staff PC's?

Mr. Smith responded:

We have looked at the hardware and software that is available and determined what we would need to comply with whatever the committee decides. We also reviewed what was used for reapportionment during the 1991 session. There were four dedicated workstations, two for each house, that covered each caucus.

Mr. Hettrick interjected:

We had to plug something into the budget. I received information listing the most expensive and the least expensive. I don't know who else received it.

Ms. Tiffany asked:

Since you are dedicating them for a period of time, what will you do with them afterwards? What is used with a GIS system is not normally needed on a desk top system since they have completely different configurations and software? How much are you going to be involved in that interim study and how are you going to service the legislature with software and data? Will Ms. Steinle be staff to that committee or will she just be involved out in the audience?

Mr. Smith answered:

Those systems were distributed throughout the LCB. One went to Research for ongoing support and viewing of the final

maps, while the rest went to other applications. Ms. Steinle will be supporting reapportionment, as she did last time and will be involved at whatever level the reapportionment subcommittee desires.

Software has specific licensing arrangements, so once a workstation is setup the software is licensed for that workstation.

Ms. Tiffany continued:

It could be licensed for a server too, if we want to do that. I'm assuming we have a server with that capacity. I just wanted to know what we were doing, because it is preemptive for us to make that decision until we get through that interim study. As long as you know that this just a guesstimate.

Mr. Hettrick concluded:

We haven't made any decisions on what to buy or anything else. It is totally up to the legislative commission. We had to plug numbers into the budget and come up with some ideas.

Mr. Anderson commented:

I'm sure many legislators would like to have an individual operation to do their own planning, however it generally ends up being a caucus plan that we go with. I hope we aren't planning to have every legislator up to full function on this, as their principal occupation during the 2001 session. I know it is a consistent concern to them as to how their districts are drawn, but last time there was adequate time to use the available workstations, so four should be sufficient this time.

Mr. Beers asked if the phone system upgrade we are looking into has methods for integrating voice mail with e-mail? What about faxing?

Mr. Bunin answered:

The telephone voice mail will integrate with the e-mail system. Fax integration is something we can do, but we are trying to decide exactly what route to take.

Senator Coffin inquired:

You were going to look into software to improve the legibility of the small, coarse text in the budgets. One of the

reasons we bought laptop computers with 14 inch screens was to be able to view the whole budget on one screen. Have you made any progress on that? Also, I would like to see us eventually move to computers that are smaller, lighter, faster and that we can see the whole budget on one page.

Mr. Smith responded:

That is both a software and hardware issue. The displays themselves need improvement before we can move away from the multiple screen view. There has already been some improvement. Technology has come a long way since we purchased these laptops and it will probably go much further in the next year and a half. I understand that weight is an issue. There are laptops lighter than these, but they are not as robust, but they certainly could do the job.

Senator Coffin asked if we need to do any additional appropriation for laptop computers for next session?

Mr. Smith said:

Over the next interim this subcommittee will be discussing what to do about laptop computers for the legislators for next session. Will you want to continue with what they have or do you want to return them and look at new equipment?

Mr. Hettrick added:

We are almost certain to have new laptops next session. Some members will keep theirs through the interim, and some won't. The laptops are leased from State Purchasing and any that are returned after session will go back to State Purchasing.

Items for the next meeting's agenda:

- The microphone and voting buttons located at each dias station are too far away from the appropriate microphone and need to be moved out, because some members can't reach them. The same situation exists in Las Vegas and also needs to be addressed.
- The lighting in the Las Vegas meeting rooms is not good.
- The subcommittee needs more information on what needs to be done to complete the cable TV access in Las Vegas, and, if possible, how to get access into the rural areas.

Ms. Koivisto added:

Another problem we need to look is telephone access between meeting rooms in the north and south. When there is a hearing in Las Vegas, we can't phone from that hearing room to the hearing room up here. We have to call the control room here, then someone from the control room has to go to the hearing room. It is very inconvenient.

Mr. Hettrick said:

We have to dial the control room from here as well, so we need to look at direct line access into all the committee rooms and intercom capability between the control room and the committee secretary's desk.

Mr. Walters explained:

Last week we installed four telecouplers running from the control room. Right now, when phone calls come in we patch them straight through to the committee rooms. We can do the same with the intercom line. We can also talk back and forth with you on any microphone in the room from the control room.

Mr. Hettrick inquired:

Whoever is in the control room right now is monitoring this meeting, so if I were to ask the controller to do something, they could do it?

Mr. Walters said that was correct.

Mr. Anderson added:

When a hearing is teleconferenced to Las Vegas, we can't see the audience in that room and they can't see the audience in this room. They are standing in a packed room feeling ignored, which is not the case at all. This is due partly because we don't receive a copy of the sign in log. Then when we do turn the cameras to the Las Vegas room, we can't tell if they are ready to go. Isn't there some way hearing rooms could see the audience?

Mr. Hettrick agreed:

Typically what we see on the screen is either the speaker at the table or the legislator who is speaking. It would be helpful to have a picture-in-picture (PIP) showing the audiences. It would also give us a feel for how many people are attending, how interested they are, as well as what is going on in general.

Ms. Koivisto asked:

Can we have the TV's in our office instead of our secretary's office?

Mr. Walters said that would not be a problem. Hers can be moved tonight.

Mr. Anderson commented:

Our secretaries are generally watching us when we are on the floor or in hearings, paying attention to where we are. When I go to an office and the member isn't there, the secretary can usually tell me exactly where they are. There may be a need for a TV in a member's office, but I believe that the secretaries do need that capability as well to help keep track of us.

Mr. Hettrick said:

RealPlayer will solve that. RealPlayer can be up on the secretary's computer while they do their work, and they don't have to watch it all the time. I like having a TV in my office so I can watch the Senate or a committee hearing. Which by the way, we need you to get video capability into all of the committee rooms.

Mr. Smith responded:

All we will need is additional hardware and software licenses. Originally when we put this together, we were thinking only of audio and not video. Presently, we are not providing RealVideo to the public; it is only available on our Intranet. We will need some direction from this subcommittee as to when, or if, they would like to make it available to the public.

Mr. Hettrick emphasized:

We need to first worry about our needs before we worry about the public. Right now the public has the advantage of RealAudio, which is incredible.

Item III--Review of past, current and future Media Services projects.

Mr. Walters stated:

All the rooms are up and running, and everything we talked about previously is complete. I would appreciate some feedback from you as to what you think about the systems so far.

Mr. Hettrick responded:

My office is close to where Mr. Walters and his crew work. That staff has put in some incredible hours and are doing a great job. The systems are working well, and the teleconferencing is also working well. Has anyone taken advantage of the blue-room capability?

Mr. Walters answered, "No one has used it yet."

Ms. Tiffany inquired:

What do you mean by the blue-room, like a studio?

Mr. Hettrick responded:

Yes. The blue-room has a live feed to Las Vegas, with full control room capability.

Ms. Tiffany asked:

Do we ever rent that room out? I am thinking of some revenues. It sounds like a great studio.

Mr. Walters explained:

The news media wants to do their own thing, their own way, so they pick a room, setup and do their own filming.

Mr. Hettrick added:

Another function of the blue-room is a direct feed to Las Vegas to do live interviews with questions and answers.

Ms. Tiffany said:

I had some staff in Utah and Arizona and I wanted to teleconference them into the Ways and Means Committee, so they wouldn't have to fly here. But we never could figure out how to do it. Is that always going to be a problem? What kept us from doing that? I never really understood why they weren't compatible. Is there a protocol or standard?

Mr. Walters explained:

People in other areas do not have the equipment that matches up with ours.

Ms. Tiffany asked:

Isn't there an industry standard? These were legislators in Utah and Arizona, who all have teleconference capability. We couldn't use their teleconference system into our system, right? Is the lack of compatibility because there are no standards?

Mr. Walters explained:

It is the compatibility between the equipment and when it was purchased. For example, the video conference equipment we had is no longer compatible with the new equipment. A lot of people are using older equipment, mainly due to the cost of replacing it. I would also like to mention that the Supreme Court has contacted us about doing video conference with them at some point in the future.

Mr. Anderson commented:

I am happy with the system and it works very well. It is truly remarkable that we have come this far so quickly. There are more kudos that can be laid out, than criticisms of the system.

A point we raised before session began is that we would like to have gotten together toward the very beginning of session to see where we were and understand our level of expectation. We didn't do that. If this subcommittee has a failing point it is that we don't meet regularly enough when we are together to keep ourselves up to date. Mr. Hettrick's point relative to PaperMaster was something that all of us would have liked to have known about. We also need to hear more from you, the staff, about the real problems. We know this is not a perfect system, but we would sure like to make it so, but we need more input from you. You need to be a little more vocal about what's right and wrong with the system. When we ask for the impossible you should explain that the technology just isn't quite there yet, but you would like to give it a try. You can be a little bit more in our face. I think we can take it.

Mr. Hettrick responded:

We tried scheduling meetings a number of times, but it has been very difficult. This session has been very packed, as you well know.

Mr. Beers said:

I attended a meeting in Legal Division with the Supreme Court folks and they just couldn't believe that they could look up Nevada Law by a keyword. If you could have seen the look of shock and surprise on their faces when we showed them how to do that, it was priceless. And that they could do it over the Internet for free. Keep that in the backs of your mind, that the communications needs to be not only in this building, but also out to the rest of the state as well.

Mr. Hettrick commented:

That is a very good point. Mr. Smith, one of the things that needs to happen is to go around to every agency, or at least send them a memo, and let them know that you would be willing to show them what is available on the LCB web site. I believe there is far more than the Supreme Court that have no idea what we have available. We could save this entire state a great deal of money if all these agencies knew what we already have instead of them trying to recreate the wheel.

Mr. Smith replied:

We are looking at a number of issues with respect to our Internet access and the features we provide. We want to provide a "How-To" and a web site map. We are hosting the Supreme Court web site and are working closely with the them on setting up some information of theirs that we will be providing.

Mr. Hettrick emphasized:

Obviously nobody from the Supreme Court had ever been to our web page, and until they can get there the first time, they won't know that there is a "How-To" or a site map. If they had ever been to our site it would have taken 10 seconds to figure out how to do an NRS lookup, and found not only a key word search, but strike outs and added language in different colors. But we have to get them there first, which is what I am asking you to do - show them how to get to our web page.

Mr. Beers stated:

I would like Mr. Smith to come up with a budget on what it would take to get RealVideo in all the committee rooms and what it would cost to make it available to the public as well. I would also like on the next agenda a discussion of the laptop personal use policy, which I find obnoxious. I went out and bought another laptop just so I could do work at night. Now I have to carry two computers around.

Mr. Hettrick explained:

Having been a part of the review process for the laptop use policy, we all went through it very carefully. We spent hours and hours going over it to get it to where it is. And while it may be obnoxious, unfortunately, we have some rules forced upon us concerning what we can legally do with publically owned property. We didn't have many choices. We got the policy as liberal as we could and still fall within those rules.

Ms. Tiffany added:

Mr. Beers has a point. I really wanted to buy the last laptop I had, but according to the statutes, I couldn't. I get comfortable with a certain look and feel, so instead of buying another one, isn't there any way we could put a policy together where we could rent them month-to-month? I would rather do that than buy another laptop. I don't see why the legislators themselves couldn't rent them, which would eliminate the personal use of public property issue.

Mr. Hettrick said:

That has some merit. Mr. Smith, please look into that and have Brenda Erdoes [Legislative Counsel] give us some advise too. What could occur is, a legislator could decide from the beginning that they want to rent the laptop monthly for the 120-day session and beyond if they choose. What would that cost? There would still be the issue of maintenance that we would need to look at. But it would eliminate the personal use of public property issue if the legislators were paying rent for the laptops. I don't know if the state is allowed to purchase and lease back to a private party for private use. Please look into that for the next meeting.

State purchasing has the rules and we have to stick to them for purchasing statewide. If we were to change the law regarding this, it would have to apply to most everything. Unless we made an exception just for the legislative side, which we might be able to. I don't see why the public would complain if we made an exception for the legislature if we want to pay our own lease. I think the public should find that very reasonable.

Mr. Smith added:

We could look to companies who provide their own lease options. The lease could be done in such a way that the legislator's would be leasing the laptop as opposed to the legislature leasing them. They would have the same equipment available to

them, and we could do the setup and everything as we have n the past. That might be another way.

There was no public testimony.

This subcommittee will meet again on at the call of the chair.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Marilyn Maxfield

Administrative Assistant,

Information Systems

Assemblyman Lynn Hettrick, Chairman