

MINUTES OF THE
LEGISLATIVE COMMISSION'S
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY SUBCOMMITTEE
May 29, 2002

A regular meeting of the Legislative Commission's Information Technology Subcommittee (ITS), pursuant to Nevada Revised Statutes 218.682, was held on Wednesday, May 29, 2002, commencing at 9:45 a.m., in Room 4401 of the Grant Sawyer State Office Building, 555 East Washington Street, Las Vegas, Nevada with simultaneous video conference to Room 4100 of the Legislative Building, 401 South Carson Street, Carson City, Nevada.

SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Assemblyman Bob Price, Chairman (in Las Vegas)
Senator Bob Coffin
Senator Dean Rhoads (in Carson City)
Senator Mike Schneider (in Las Vegas)
Assemblywoman Sharron Angle (in Las Vegas)
Assemblyman Bob Beers (in Las Vegas)
Assemblyman Lynn Hettrick (in Carson City)
Assemblyman Harry Mortenson (in Las Vegas)
Assemblyman Debbie Smith (in Carson City)

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL BUREAU (LCB) STAFF PRESENT:

Allan Smith, Manager, Information Systems (IS) (in Las Vegas)
Marilyn Maxfield, Administrative Assistant, Information Systems (in Carson City)

Item I—Approval of minutes from the meeting held February 6, 2002.

**SENATOR SCHNEIDER MOVED FOR APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE
MEETING HELD FEBRUARY 6, 2002, AS AMENDED. THE MOTION WAS
SECONDED BY ASSEMBLYMAN BEERS AND CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Item II—Discussion and recommendations for legislators' laptops and other equipment for the 2003 session.

Mr. Smith outlined a discussion from the last meeting that centered around whether to purchase new laptop computers for the legislators or to keep the IBM T20 laptops they currently use. If the IBM T20's are retained for another session, they would need to be upgraded by adding 128 megabytes(mb) of memory for a total of 256 mb, and replacing the built-in modem with a built-in combination modem and network interface card. These upgrades would cost approximately \$150 per computer.

Given the current economic times, it is my recommendation to keep and upgrade the IBM T20 laptops. The new computers that are available are not much faster, and would not add much more processing power. At \$2500 to \$3000 per unit it would cost \$175,000 to \$210,000 for new machines, verses \$10,000 to \$14,000 to upgrade the current machines.

He also asked for direction from the subcommittee on whether or not the LCB should provide the legislators

with personal digital assistants (PDA's).

Mr. Smith responded to Mr. Price's inquiry that PDA's cost \$300 to \$500. If the subcommittee chooses to purchase PDA's it would be best to offer them to the legislators and purchase only the requested number, as opposed to buying 63 units and having many go unused.

Responding to Senator Rhoads question as to the usefulness of a PDA, Mr. Smith explained that they are used to keep track of addresses, to make notes, to maintain a date book, and have many features found in an office environment. They can also do word processing and store pictures. And they are small enough to fit in a pocket.

Mr. Beers added that a PDA is synchronized with the PC-based version of your data. You can take your PDA on the road and use it to make appointments, take notes, etcetera, and when you get back to your office you set it in a little cradle, push a button. The information will transfer to your Outlook calendar maintained on the LCB Server. So it is a method of having your critical PC-based data, that being primarily your address book and your calendar, at your fingertips when you are away from your PC, and then being able to integrate information back to your PC when you get home.

I would like to add that I do not use my PDA during the session, although it is indispensable outside the session. During the session, I am inside the building most of the time and consider my laptop a giant PDA that is always synchronized. In the session environment I do not believe PDA's would be very useful; outside the session they may well be.

Senator Coffin stated that committee chairmen in particular would make use of these because they have a difficult time with all they are doing to managing a meeting, and then to have to manage a laptop as well. With a PDA they would be able to communicate with their secretaries and the outside worlds a good deal easier. I have witnessed the chairmen being at a disadvantage and unable to carry on an important conversation with a secretary that they might be able to do with a PDA.

I only need Outlook on my computer. I go to the web occasionally for research, but primarily I am in constant communication with people, whether it is business or family back home, or my secretary, or other members of the legislature. I could do that easier with a PDA.

I do not know if they can be networked to use while walking around in the building or if technical staff has the capability to do all that. Would our technical staff be able to help members who chose to use them, or do they have a limited experience with them? I am in favor of acquiring PDA's. I would use it in session, because it would be a lot easier than carrying a laptop.

Mr. Beers held up his personal PDA for all to see and said it was a Palm PDA. The idiosyncrasy with a Palm PDA is that there is a skill-set involved in learning to writing with it, much like graffiti. No one finds this useful if they have a PC or laptop at their disposal. The entry of data so obnoxious that I always do my input of addresses and phone book on my PC, then transfer it to my PDA. I use my Palm as a read-only device. Dates can be entered on the PDA and transferred back into your PC. But it is an unwieldy process and for that reason I don't think anybody would find it useful during the session. There are other types of PDA's that are more advanced, with a miniature keyboard, that approaches miniature laptop device status, and they cost commensurably more. They do have the keyboard and a little version of Word and you can actually type on a keyboard, if you can make your fingers hit the keys that are much smaller than the normal keyboard. It is the nature of data entry into a PDA that precludes people from using it as a stationary device. It is almost always used when you are portable, but if you have a laptop and a PDA, you will almost every time go to the laptop.

Senator Coffin recognized that PDA's may be for some people but not for everyone, which is why he agrees

with Mr. Smith that members could be invited to get them and purchase only that many. Prices on the top-end PDA's are coming down below \$600 and \$700, and continue to drop, so by the end of the year we might have a real bargain. I think it is something we should pursue.

Mr. Mortenson stated he would very definitely be in favor of replacing the modem with a modem/net card.

There was open discussion concerning difficulty with deleting e-mail messages. Mr. Smith acknowledged the problems and stated what Information Systems is doing to rectify them.

- We have implemented Microsoft Outlook-Web access, which allows you to access e-mail through any web connection. It has a very different look and feel, and is not necessarily for everyone.
- We are working on implementing the Virtual Private Network (VPN), which allows you access to our network through any web connection. This is a secure connection. You will have access to the Outlook you are using now.
- Both accesses are on a digital subscriber line (DSL), so you are able to accomplish tasks at DSL speeds.

ASSEMBLYMAN BEERS MOVED TO PROCEED WITH THE LEGISLATOR'S LAPTOP COMPUTER UPGRADES OF 128 MEGABYTES OF ADDITIONAL RAM AND REPLACE THE MODEM PORT WITH A COMBINATION MODEM AND NETWORK PORT. THE MOTION WAS SECONDED BY ASSEMBLYMAN MORTENSON AND CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

Senator Coffin requested that purchasing of PDA's be placed on the next meeting agenda for further discussion, and Mr. Price agreed.

Item III-Discussion and recommendations for the upgrade of the public wireless network.

Mr. Smith explained that last session the LCB provided a service to the public and lobbyists, renting our old wireless equipment which enabled them to connect to the internet through our network, outside the firewall. There were approximately 30 users of this service, and the rental fee was \$75 for the full session. This service worked well and feedback was very positive.

I am asking this subcommittee for direction regarding this public service. We would need to purchase new equipment for next session. The old equipment is out dated, and there are no new drivers or software written to support it on the Windows 2000 or Windows XP operating platform, therefore the equipment has been rendered useless. To purchase 30 network cards at \$80 to \$85 each, and 7 to 10 transmitter unit access points at \$150 each, the total cost would be \$4000 to \$5000. How much do you want to charge for this service and in what areas of the legislative building do you want to provide the access? If the subcommittee would like continue this public service, they need to take the recommendation to the Legislative Commission.

Open discussion followed. They decided that the rental fee should be enough as to recover the total costs in one session.

ASSEMBLYMAN BEERS MOVED TO TAKE THE RECOMMENDATION TO THE LEGISLATIVE COMMISSION TO UPGRADE THE PUBLIC WIRELESS SYSTEM, TO MAKE THE SYSTEMS AVAILABLE THROUGHOUT THE LEGISLATIVE BUILDING AND TO CHARGE \$175 FOR THE SESSION. THE MOTION WAS SECONDED BY SENATOR COFFIN AND CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

There was no public testimony.

This subcommittee will meet again on September 26, 2002 at 1:00 p.m.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 10:45 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Marilyn Maxfield
Administrative Assistant,
Information Systems

Assemblyman Bob Price, Chairman