



**DEPARTMENT OF ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES
BUREAU OF ENTERPRISE SYSTEMS AND TECHNOLOGY**

1:00 – 3:00 PM

MINUTES

September 12, 2022

Commission Members in Attendance

Raymond, Mark — Commission Chair and Chief Information Officer, DAS-BITS
Mundrane, Michael — Vice President for Information Technology and Chief Information Officer, University of Connecticut (UCONN)
Aylesworth, Ryan — Town Manager, Town of Mansfield (Connecticut Council of Municipalities)
Baillie, Colleen — Director, West Haven Public Library (Connecticut Library Association)
Caruso, Nick — Senior Staff Associate, Connecticut Association of Boards of Education
Casey, Doug — Executive Director, CT Commission for Educational Technology
Cohen, Burt — Staff Attorney, Office of Consumer Counsel
Dillon, Tom — Independent (Minority Leader of the House)
Dumais, Chip — Executive Director, Cooperative Education Services (Office of the Governor)
Elsesser, John — Town Manager, Town of Coventry (CT Council of Small Towns)
Gopalakrishnan, Ajit — Chief Performance Officer, State Department of Education
Johnson, Barbara — Colchester Public Schools (Connecticut Educators Computer Association)
Provencher, Maura — Vice President of Research and Administration, Connecticut Conference of Independent Colleges (CCIC)
Schander, Deborah — State Librarian, Connecticut State Library
Smith, Josh — Superintendent, Region 15 Public Schools (Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents)
Thomas, Molly — Education Policy Consultant, Office of Economic and Community Development
Uche, Chinma — Math and Computer Science Teacher, CREC Academy of Aerospace and Engineering (Connecticut Education Association)
Williams, Holly — Section Director, Education and Workforce Development, Office of Policy and Management (OPM)
Zak, Scott — Senior Director of Learning Technologies, Connecticut State Colleges and Universities



Others in Attendance

Hackett, Victoria — Deputy Commissioner of Energy & Technology, Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP)

Kocsondy, Ryan — Director, Connecticut Education Network

Pisacich, Kevin — Director of Telecommunications and Broadband, DEEP

Racamato, Victoria — Assistant to the State Chief Information Officer, DAS-BITS

Welcome

Chair Mark Raymond welcomed attendees and guests to the September 2022 meeting of the Connecticut Commission for Educational Technology. He noted that CT-N was streaming and [recording the meeting](#) and referred members to the materials posted on the [meeting Web site](#), shared in advance. Mark acknowledged September as a wonderful time to host Commission meetings, given the recent start to the school year, with energy and insights to inform the work of this group.

He welcomed two special guests from the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP), Victoria Hackett, the Deputy Commissioner of Energy and Technology, and Kevin Pisacich, the Director of Telecommunications and Broadband. He thanked them for joining the Commission to provide updates on the Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) program that DEEP is leading on behalf of the State.

Approval of Meeting Minutes

Mark noted that minutes from the [June 6, 2022 meeting](#) had been shared previously, with members having the opportunity to suggest changes. He entertained a motion to approve those minutes, with Burt Cohen making the first and Josh Smith the second to do so. The motion carried unanimously, with no abstentions.

Report of the Executive Director

Following approval of the previous meeting minutes, Mark welcomed Doug to share highlights from his [September Executive Director's Report](#).

- Future Ready Schools: This spring, leadership teams from 14 K – 12 districts joined the Connecticut cohort of Future Ready Schools, which the Commission helped to organize. This program facilitates the development of strategic plans that leverage technology for teaching and learning, based on a [framework](#) that addresses curriculum, instruction, professional development, privacy, and other essential components of education. Members of the cohort have met several times over the summer and will look to complete their plans this fall, culminating in an in-person conference hosted at WorkSpace in Bethel. Participants have expressed strong enthusiasm for the program, underscoring its value in enhancing many aspects of instruction and school operations. Leaders of other districts have already expressed interest in participating in future cohorts.



- SETDA State Trends Report: On September 7, the State Educational Technology Directors Association (SETDA) released its first [State EdTech Trends Report](#). The findings reflect the top concerns and recommendations of digital learning experts from all 50 states. The report provides context for the work of the Commission and points to several key takeaways. There is strong alignment in educational priorities: educator recruitment and training, learning loss, equity of technology access, and social and emotional well-being. Specific technology-related concerns include sustainability, access to broadband, cybersecurity, and the effective use of technology for instruction. Leaders expressed concern that states and local districts do not always leverage technology assets to support and connect key education concerns with digital learning resources. The report highlights the strong work of the Commission (see [page 9](#)) and the benefit of having a dedicated educational technology group to provide consistent leadership for the state's education institutions.
- Digital Equity Program: Doug provided updates on the Commission's work in leading the [State's Digital Equity program](#), funded through the [Bipartisan Infrastructure Law](#). Over the next year, the Commission will facilitate the development of a Digital Equity Plan that identifies and addresses barriers to broadband and device availability, affordability, adoption, and use. Input from representatives of covered populations, historically disenfranchised groups, will greatly inform the development of the plan. Doug noted a Digital Equity Summit the Commission will host on October 26 to enlist the insights of leaders representing all Connecticut residents, especially those within the aforementioned covered populations. Federal funding will support research into barriers to technology adoption and use, with the Commission working toward a final Digital Equity Plan by next fall.

Mark thanked Doug for his updates and welcomed questions from other Commission members. He encouraged them to attend the October Summit and to provide their valuable insights into digital equity concerns to inform the state plan.



Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Program Overview

Deputy Commissioner Hackett greeted the Commission members and provided an overview of broadband efforts that DEEP leads. She noted Governor Lamont's leadership in ensuring universal access to broadband, reflected in his broadband bill last year, signed into law as [Public Act 21-159](#). That law defines elements of the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), key components of which DEEP administers, and prepared the state to make efficient use of funding through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. She noted the efficiencies in DEEP's administration of broadband programs, given the stakeholder groups and vetting processes common to both DEEP's longstanding energy programs and the newer broadband initiatives. The DEEP Bureau of Energy and Technology Policy (BETP) also provides expertise and insights into proposed rulings and legislation tied to broadband access.

Following this overview, Director Pisacich provided details about DEEP's ARPA and BEAD program work. He first acknowledged the expertise of partners that include the Commission, the Office of Consumer Counsel (OCC), and the Office of Policy and Management (OPM) Global Information System (GIS, i.e., mapping) teams, which work closely to coordinate broadband research, planning, deployment, and advocacy.

Kevin noted the launch of BETP in January, with subsequent milestones including the development of a request for proposal and selection of a consultant to assist with program design and administration as well as a [request for information \(RFI\)](#) to enlist input on the BEAD program. The ARPA funding that DEEP oversees totals nearly \$43M to fund Internet deployment to unserved and underserved areas. The BEAD program includes \$100M, with a priority first to connect unserved areas, then underserved regions, then anchor institutions. He mentioned a required minimum 25 percent match for any entities seeking funding under the BEAD program. The DEEP BETP team submitted Connecticut's application for funding in August and awaits the release of the Federal Communications Commission's broadband maps. These availability maps will help define priority areas to address in Connecticut. He noted the current inaccuracy of those maps, given that they reflect availability by census tract rather than residence.

Following Kevin's presentation, Mark welcomed questions from the Commission. He raised the topic of demand, which has traditionally driven broadband deployment. Vicki reiterated the importance of concerted, coordinated outreach across programs — BEAD, Digital Equity, and others — to help give voice to residents and businesses that need broadband. Burt welcomed all of these efforts but noted that OCC's response to the DEEP BEAD RFI cautioned against requiring fiber as the sole means of connecting unserved areas. Instead, OCC prioritized the availability of broadband service to all unserved households through any practical means. He also mentioned OCC's position that BEAD funding support digital equity investments including devices for residents. Mark welcomed these suggestions and encouraged continued close coordination of efforts across agencies.



Commission Resolution

Mark opened the next topic for discussion by referring attendees to the [resolution](#) that the Commission passed at its [June 6, 2022 meeting](#). That document presented a number of recommendations for making effective use of technology in teaching and learning, falling under four categories: leadership commitment; essential conditions for learning, including devices and broadband as well as support of CEN; digital equity, including the definition and support of skill development necessary to leverage digital tools and pedagogies; and educator supports to ensure ongoing and relevant professional development for teachers. He expressed the importance of sharing the resolution broadly with the education community and welcomed input from members on how to put these recommendations into action.

Suggestions from the July 26 Digital Learning Advisory Council meeting, reflected in [the minutes from that discussion](#), include the use of the resolution to inform the forthcoming five-year strategic plan of the State Board of Education; sharing of the recommendations with the General Assembly's Education Committee; use of the resolution to create a filter or lens centered on education outcomes (i.e., portrait of the graduate) to inform future legislation and policy decisions; ties to workforce preparation; link to [Public Act 22-80](#), which calls for a review of the teacher certification system; and alignment with the priorities of leadership groups such as the Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents (CAPSS).

John Elsesser noted that the resolution does not specifically mention towns, which provide much of the funding that supports public education. He regretted this oversight in the approved resolution and raised the opportunity to share the document with groups such as the Connecticut Council of Municipalities. Nick encouraged Commission members to bring the priorities of the offices and organizations that appointed them to the discussion as well as sharing the resolution with those groups. Barbara Johnson and Josh reiterated this point, with Josh indicating that he would enlist members of the CAPSS Technology Committee to consider possible actions that would advance the recommendations of the Commission.

Mark welcomed these suggestions, reiterating the first priority of socializing the recommendations and welcoming feedback from members of the education community and state leadership organizations. He also pointed to the resolution as a basis for the Commission's next strategic plan.



Digital Learning Advisory Council Report

Doug provided a brief summary of the proceedings of the July Digital Learning Advisory Council meeting, with details shared in advance through the [meeting minutes](#). He underscored the desire of Advisory Council members to see the thoughtful implementation of the Commission's resolution into other strategic plans and programs that ensure ongoing support for effective teaching and learning through the use of technology.

Infrastructure Advisory Council Report

The Infrastructure Advisory Council Chair, Tom Dillon, provided brief updates on that group's August 2, 2022 convening, [the minutes of which](#) appear on the Commission's Web site. The meeting focused on design aspects of the \$10M expansion of the [Community Wireless program](#). Tom reminded members that the initial phase resulted in the deployment of 170 access points at anchor institutions across the state to provide safe, reliable Internet access during the pandemic. ARPA funding will support the expansion of the program through the Governor's \$10M investment approved as part of the 2022 implementer bill. Unlike the initial phase, in which CEN directly managed the installation of these access points, the second wave will go to community-based applicants to design and manage deployments, with the Commission and CEN providing oversight.

The August Advisory Council meeting focused on how best to design the program, with considerations to outreach, application design and scoring, impact assessment, and overall timing. One promising suggestion from George Claffey, Chief Information Officer of Central Connecticut State University and Advisory Council member, is to develop a letter of intent. Doing so would allow community leaders to indicate their interest in applying for funds, providing an overall gauge of need. Collecting letters of intent would also enable the Commission and CEN to identify common needs and provide feedback to submitters on ways they might make their formal applications more efficient through partnerships with other organizations also planning to apply for funding.

On August 30, Tom, Ryan Kocsondy, and Doug met to review these recommendations and define next steps with the program design. Ryan has since completed the required application for approval for the Community Wireless and other ARPA-funded programs through the United States Department of Commerce with the help of OPM. Funding should become available in late 2022 or early 2023.

Mark thanked Tom for his updates and for his ongoing leadership of the Infrastructure Advisory Council. With no questions from the Commission members, Mark welcomed Ryan to discuss the highlights of his quarterly report.



CEN Updates

Ryan encouraged attendees to review the [posted CEN updates for September](#). He noted the annual increase in bandwidth usage as well as distributed denial of service (DDoS) attempts that typically come with the return to school. To provide greater insights into those attacks, CEN has deployed advanced reporting features. These reports help identify and potentially mitigate future attempts and provide information that can help the work of law enforcement agencies in their investigations.

Expansion of CEN access continues to the state's libraries. The eighth phase of the Connecticut Library Consortium initiative will bring the total number of libraries connected to 149, representing 78 percent of all libraries in the state. Proposed ARPA funding will help complete access to CEN for all Connecticut libraries.

Ryan highlighted staff changes, with the transition of Molly Zipkin to Michael Mundrane's team within UCONN's University Information Technology Systems. Rachael Collard will shift from serving as CEN's Marketing and Publicity Coordinator to Member Services Specialist. And the CEN team welcomed Radu Nedelcu, a former Special Forces officer, as a Project Management Fellow as part of the federal Hiring Our Heroes program.

Public Comment

Following the CEN report, Mark welcomed a call for public comment, with none given.

Scheduled 2022 Meeting Date

The final meeting of 2022, scheduled for 1:00 PM on Monday, December 5, will take place in Hartford. Mark spoke to the importance of in-person convenings, which afford much greater opportunities for collaboration than do virtual meetings.

Adjournment

Mark concluded the meeting by calling for a motion to adjourn, made by Nick. With a unanimous vote to conclude the meeting at approximately 2:45 PM, Mark thanked the members for their continued service to the Commission.

Respectfully submitted,

Douglas Casey
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A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Douglas Casey". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.