



**DEPARTMENT OF ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES  
BUREAU OF ENTERPRISE SYSTEMS AND TECHNOLOGY  
55 Farmington Avenue, Hartford, CT 06105**

**1:00 – 3:00 PM**

**MINUTES**

**March 2, 2020**

**Commission Members in Attendance**

Raymond, Mark – Commission Chair and Chief Information Officer, DAS-BEST  
Mundrane, Michael — Commission Vice Chair and Vice President and Chief Information Officer, University of Connecticut  
Baillie, Colleen — Director, West Haven Public Library  
Casey, Doug – Executive Director, CT Commission for Educational Technology  
Dillon, Tom — Principal, The David A. Fields Group (Minority Leader of the House)  
Dumais, Charles — Executive Director, Cooperative Educational Services (C.E.S.) (Office of the Governor)  
Elsesser, John — Town Manager, Town of Coventry (CT Council of Small Towns)  
Feinmark, Russell — Connecticut General Assembly  
LaValle, Dawn — Director, Division of Library Development, Connecticut State Library  
Minikowski, Andrew — Staff Attorney, Office of Consumer Counsel  
Provencher, Maura — Vice President of Research and Administration, Connecticut Conference of Independent Colleges (CCIC)  
Stewart, Erin — Mayor, City of New Britain (Minority Leader of the Senate)  
Vittner, John — Director, IT Policy, Office of Policy and Management (OPM)  
Zak, Scott — Senior Director of Learning Technologies, Board of Regents

**Others in Attendance**

Giammarco, Peter — Verizon Wireless  
Kocsondy, Ryan — Director, Connecticut Education Network (CEN)  
Racamato, Victoria — Assistant to the State Chief Information Officer

**Welcome**

Commission Chair Mark Raymond greeted members and others in attendance and called the meeting to order at 1:00 PM. He expressed his appreciation for everyone in attendance, especially given the busy legislative season as well as growing concerns about the coronavirus, a topic the group would discuss later in the meeting.



Mark welcomed the Honorable Mayor Erin Stewart of New Britain to her first Commission meeting following her appointment by the office of Senator Len Fasano, Minority Leader of the Senate. He also acknowledged the valuable contributions of the previously appointed chief elected official, Carl Fortuna of Old Saybrook. Following this welcome, Mark asked each member in attendance to introduce themselves.

### **Approval of Meeting Minutes**

The Commission members had the opportunity to review [the minutes of the December 2, 2019 meeting](#) prior to today's gathering. Mark welcomed a motion to approve the minutes, which John Elsesser offered and Chip Dumais seconded. With no call for discussion or revisions to the minutes, the Commission approved the document unanimously, with John Vittner abstaining because he did not attend the December 2 meeting.

### **Report of the Executive Director**

- **2019 Annual Report**

In early February, the Commission released its [2019 Annual Report](#) detailing progress mapped to the [State Educational Technology Goals and Plan](#). Doug noted that these updates fall roughly halfway through the Plan's five-year span, coming in the context of trends such as augmented and virtual reality, the buildout of high-speed 5G cellular networks, and increased use of artificial intelligence in all aspects of learning and living. He thanked the members for their efforts to raise awareness of the Commission's work and share the plan among their constituent groups and the organizations that appointed them to the Commission.

Doug highlighted a few points of progress during 2019, including the launch of a statewide initiative around open education resources (OER) in the form of [GoOpenCT.org](#), continued efforts to get learners online outside of school, increased utilization of federal E-rate funds, best practices in data privacy, and significant cost avoidance through the State's digital library (researchIT) and the Connecticut Education Network (CEN).

- **Strategic Initiatives**

In the course of writing this year's Annual Report, Doug culled a [list of initiatives](#) that came up during regular and special Commission meetings as well as Advisory Council meetings. Progress continues in areas such as Eduroam pilots, promoting digital learning standards, and a reverse auction to minimize the cost of student computers. Other ideas that have emerged over the past year



include a pre-service requirement for teachers to develop competency in digital pedagogies, a statewide program to loan access points to students, and the design of a survey to measure the homework gap.

- **Open Education Resources (OER) Grant Application**

In late January, Doug submitted a proposal for funding through the State's Public, Educational and Governmental Programming and Educational Technology Investment Account (PEGPETIA) grant program. The initiative would include the design and launch of a statewide OER portal to allow educators to create, share, and curate free digital learning materials such as lesson plans, unit plans, instructional videos, and assessments. Several pilot districts as well as the Connecticut Association of Boards of Education (CABE), the Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents (CAPSS), and the State Educational Resource Center (SERC) wrote letters endorsing the proposal.

Tom Dillon asked whether the PEGPETIA program would continue in subsequent years, or whether 2020 would be the last award period. John Elsesser indicated that while the language reinstating the fund is not clear, past sweeps of the program do not bode well for continued support. John did note that the requested funding across all proposals totals approximately \$8 million. While this exceeds the \$7 million allocated to the program, it does provide hope that most applicants would receive some funding.

- **Senate Bill 5: An Act Concerning Internet Service Providers and Net Neutrality Principles**

In the context of the Commission's past efforts to protect Net Neutrality rules (e.g., [letter to the Federal Communications Commission in December 2017](#)), Doug called attention to [Senate Bill 5](#). The proposed legislation would require fixed and mobile Internet providers to register with the Public Utilities Regulatory Authority (PURA) at an annual cost of \$5,000. Companies would also have to provide assurances of their adherence to Net Neutrality practices, that is, not restricting or throttling content, apps, or services. The bill would require PURA to review any complaints, conduct hearings, and levy penalties for non-compliance. A public hearing regarding the legislation took place on February 27, with [comments posted](#) to the Connecticut General Assembly's Web site.

John Elsesser asked whether the Department of Administrative Services (DAS) or CEN had submitted testimony regarding the statute. Mark responded that, based on an analysis from DAS counsel, the law would not apply to CEN. The bill addresses compliance of "mass-market retail service" providers rather than entities such as CEN, which operates more as a collaborative. Andrew Minikowski of the Office of Consumer Counsel (OCC), which did submit testimony in favor of the bill, agreed that the proposed legislation does not apply to CEN.



Without further questions or discussions regarding the Executive Director's Report, Mark expressed his appreciation for Doug's efforts and the collective impact of the Commission as reflected in the 2019 Annual Report. He shared the document with the Office of the Governor, pointing to the work of the Commission and Network as a model in shared services and cross-disciplinary thinking. He encouraged members to continue promoting the Report with their constituent groups.

## **CEN Updates**

Mark turned the floor over to Ryan Kocsondy of CEN. Ryan began his remarks by calling attention to the CEN Annual Report posted on the [CEN Web site](#). He encouraged members to review and share the document with their constituents. He then provided an overview of his quarterly report, shared in print and via the [Commission's Web site](#).

- **Provide Value**

The services delivered to CEN members continue to provide strong value and result in significant cost avoidance. Ryan shared an estimated \$17 – 25 million in estimated savings when comparing the cost of CEN services such as Internet access, Web filtering, and cyber security protections with those of commercial providers. John Elsesser and Michael Mundrane both acknowledged the mitigation of distributed denial of service (DDoS) attacks, reaching nearly 1,000 in 2019, as a strong point of differentiation and value for the Network.

Mark asked whether DDoS incidents affected a certain cross-section of CEN members, positing that such attacks might target specific types of institutions. Ryan estimated that DDoS incidents typically concentrate on approximately 10 percent of CEN's customers, mostly in K – 12, higher education, and municipal entities. He did note that at least one library experienced a DDoS attack in 2019. Tom Dillon echoed the comments of other members around CEN's value and asked if it were possible to estimate the total "impact hours," the duration of DDoS attacks across members during a given period of time. Ryan acknowledged the value of such a measure to help convey the potential indirect cost of cyber attacks that CEN mitigates.

In addition to continued work in connecting the state's libraries, Ryan provided details on the Network's application for PEGPETIA funding to upgrade video conferencing equipment. His team also assisted several anchor institutions in developing PEGPETIA applications to help fund connections to the Network.



- **Ignite Innovation**

With increasing dependence among CEN members on cloud-based applications and storage, Ryan reminded the Commission of the Network's [Cloud Connect offering](#), delivered in partnership with Internet2. The service provides no-cost transport to the three providers that education institutions leverage: Amazon Web Services, Google Cloud, and Microsoft Azure Express Route. Members can also subscribe for a fee to a dedicated transport service with these providers.

- **Foster Collaboration**

Ryan noted the well-attended town halls that he and his team facilitated in December in Fairfield and Litchfield. These and earlier sessions have provided valuable feedback on the Network's strategic plan, future service offerings, and professional development topics.

The [CEN Annual Conference](#) will take place May 7 – 8 this year, again at the Hartford Convention Center. New in 2020, the two-day format will offer longer half- and full-day sessions on the 7<sup>th</sup>, with traditional keynote and shorter workshops on the 8<sup>th</sup>. The event will celebrate the Network and Commission's 20<sup>th</sup> anniversaries and include a welcome from former Governor Jodi M. Rell.

- **Enhance Core Services**

A number of activities have taken place to support the continuity of CEN services. The CEN team performed Internet Routing Registry updates to ensure proper delivery of traffic inside the Network and exchanged through the broader Internet. Last year's Bond Commission authorization of \$1.5 million will support upgrades to end-of-life or end-of-support hardware in the Network's distribution layer. Finally, progress continues on CEN's extranet projects, which will result in 100 Gbps connections with Boston and Cambridge as well as New York City. The connections will provide direct access to services concentrated in these major metropolitan areas.

Following Ryan's report, a discussion came up around the Energy and Innovation Park in New Britain, which will house the region's largest data center. Ryan confirmed that multiple CEN points of presence exist close to the facility to enable a connection to the data center following its construction. On the topic of buildouts, John Elsesser shared that Coventry has engaged with the Kansas-based company WANRack to bore a conduit that will house managed fiber to connect two of the town's schools. The Coventry Board of Education secured federal E-rate funds to offset the cost of construction.



## Digital Learning Advisory Council Report

Nick Caruso, chair of the Digital Learning Advisory Council, could not attend the quarterly Commission meeting due to a death in his family. Doug extended the Commission's condolences to Nick.

As reflected in the [minutes of the February 5 meeting](#) hosted at CAFE, that group addressed the [list of current and potential strategic initiatives](#). Digital Learning Advisory Council members highlighted the need for the broader education community to help shape innovations in technology, rather than simply responding to offerings from the private sector. Doug noted that many educational technology standards exist, such as the [Advanced Distributed Learning Initiative's Experience API](#). An opportunity exists to articulate the vision and needs of education — based on common learning standards — for the next generation of technology solutions, including high-capacity cellular networks, artificial intelligence, and virtual reality.

A topic that did not appear on the list of current or proposed initiatives but that Advisory Council members raised as a serious concern is cyber security. The group expressed a need for a statewide volunteer corps of cyber security experts to help their peers address and recover from attacks. They also expressed interest in volume discounts on services such as intrusion detection and prevention as well as high-quality training for technical staff. The group's discussion also revealed the need to underscore existing CEN benefits and services. For example, some Advisory Council members suggested that the State provide direct connections to major cloud providers, which it already does through CEN's Cloud Connect.

The February 5 discussion also addressed the need to acknowledge and amplify the role of libraries in addressing the digital divide. Libraries serve as community anchors that provide not only computers and Internet connections but also the trained staff to support patrons in conducting research, applying for jobs, completing school work, and a host of other activities that often require personal support. Dawn LaValle, who attended the February 5 meeting, echoed the key role that libraries play. She introduced the term "digital refugees" that library leaders have adopted, referring to citizens who have few, if any, technology resources available for learning and civic engagement. Library staff play a critical role in supporting such individuals.

Mark tied this topic of serving the general citizenry to efforts within DAS and other agencies to provide multiple service channels to Connecticut residents. Moving labor-intensive processes to self-service, online experiences may not serve all residents. However, doing so enables State agencies to dedicate more of their staff resources to supporting citizens who do not have the skills and access to take advantage of online service options. He also pointed to the key role of partner institutions and organizations such as local libraries, community centers, schools, and faith-based organizations to



help address the high-touch needs of some citizens. Colleen Bailie echoed these points and offered as an example the role of local libraries in supporting census collection and in assisting people with tax questions each year. Michael raised the point that even with access to devices and the Internet, some citizens may still wish to engage with others for assistance. Colleen noted that some people may not want to use digital tools, either for privacy or other reasons.

Erin Stewart noted the key role that libraries play in New Britain. A satellite human services office within the library serves residents who may feel too intimidated to go to City Hall with questions. The satellite staff takes the onus off librarians of responding to community and human services issues, which they are generally not trained to address. Doug drew a parallel with school-based health centers, which provide basic screening and care in familiar settings, close to where families live, and with hours that may be more accommodating than those of a traditional doctor's office.

The last topic that emerged as a priority among the Advisory Council members is policy and supports for alternatives to in-school instruction. Members of the K – 12 community expressed the need to acknowledge online learning as a viable alternative and supplement to traditional "seat time." Doug mentioned that CAPSS has developed a [draft plan](#) for schools to consider, including both pre-printed and self-paced lessons as well as digital, collaborative models. This priority has become especially timely as colleges and schools prepare for different modalities of learning if they have to close school or cancel classes. Erin acknowledged the potential of adopting alternative learning modalities but cautioned that any such plans would need to accommodate for the needs of urban students and families.

Chip offered a few clarifying points regarding online and blended learning for K – 12 institutions. First, he presented the term "alternative learning sessions," rather than "alternative learning days." This ties to state legislation mandating that districts provide a minimum number of instructional days each year. Without action by either the State Department of Education or the General Assembly via legislative changes, he did not see any likelihood of districts piloting alternative learning sessions. He did note the exception of school boards planning for more than 180 days. A district with 183 days scheduled, for example, could use up to three of its "extra" days for distance learning, still meeting the 180-day in-school requirement.

Having concluded this overview of the Advisory Council's top priorities, Doug asked for Commission member input on the list. He welcomed feedback on the topics discussed, whether other initiatives would rise to the top of member priorities, and input on other resources and organizations that the Commission could tap in order to move these efforts forward. Mark commented on the breadth of initiatives contained in the list, which remains ambitious, and would not add to or remove from it. Erin underscored the



importance of resources and systems to help close the digital divide for learners with little or no access to technology.

Given the discussion of learning outside of school, with the potential of closings to mitigate against the spread of the Coronavirus, Mark shared some of the work taking place at the State to help communities prepare for such situations. [NOTE: Since then, the Commission released [guidance and resources on educational continuity](#).] He noted the approaches that countries such as Japan have taken, providing instruction via local television stations, for example. He asked members to provide their thoughts on how to help ensure continuity of learning for local schools.

Michael noted that providing educational continuity if schools and colleges close remains challenging because so much of learning depends on face-to-face interaction. The teaching community at the University of Connecticut has adopted distance learning tools and approaches that support quarantined students returning from “Level 3” countries, for example, but not all institutions are as prepared with virtual learning tools and pedagogies. Those experiences are not seamless, he noted, and Mark agreed that if virtual learning were easy — from policy to infrastructure and practice — we would likely have seen its broader adoption. That said, he proposed that even imperfect solutions that accommodate school closures as a form of social distancing have more benefits than drawbacks.

### **Public Comment**

Following this discussion of instructional continuity, Mark issued a call for public comment. None of the visitors in attendance raised additional topics or questions.

### **Scheduled 2020 Meeting Dates**

Mark noted the following Commission meetings scheduled for the remainder of the 2020 calendar year:

- Monday, June 1
- Monday, September 7
- Monday, December 7



### **Adjournment**

Having covered all of the agenda items, Mark called for a motion to adjourn. John Elsesser provided the motion, Michael Mundrane the second, and the members voted unanimously to conclude the meeting at approximately 2:45 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Douglas Casey  
*Executive Director*  
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A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Douglas Casey". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "D" and "C".