**Infrastructure Advisory Council**
Meeting Minutes
*May 15, 2017*

**Attendees**

- Colleen Bailie — West Haven Public Library
- Joe Campbell — CT Technical High Schools
- Doug Casey — Commission for Educational Technology
- George Claffey — Western CT State University, Charter Oak Community College
- Fred Kass — Trinity College
- Kerri Kearney — Manchester Public Schools
- Ryan Kocsondy — CT Education Network
- Michael Mundrane — University of Connecticut
- Susan Shellard — Department of Economic and Community Development
- Sabina Sitaru — Independent
- Bill Vallee — State Broadband Office
- Rick Widlansky — Libraries Online (LION)
- Rob Wilson — Somers Public Schools

# Agenda

1) Welcome and Introductions

2) CEN Funding

3) CEN Services

4) Equity

5) Commission Strategic Plan

# Meeting Notes

The points below represent an assimilation of ideas rather than a verbatim or chronological record of points shared.

### Welcome and Introductions

The meeting convened at 2:00 PM with a welcome by Doug Casey of the Commission. Attendees introduced themselves and their role within their organizations. Ryan Kocsondy took a few minutes to introduce himself as the new Director of the Connecticut Education Network (CEN). In his previous role in charge of technology for UConn's West Hartford campus, Ryan appreciates the critical role that CEN plays in

providing robust, safe, and affordable broadband to our state's educational institutions and remains committed to ensuring the Network's health and effective service delivery.

### CEN Funding

Doug shared high-level details of the Governor's proposed budget released earlier in the day (May 15, 2017). The revised budget included the same funding as did the February 8 allocations, with $952,907 for FY 18 (down from $1,100,000 in FY 17) and $0 for FY 19.

Advisory Council members indicated that the reduction in General Fund offsets and resulting increases in member charges might lead many organizations to reduce or discontinue service. Rick Widlansky cited more than a dozen libraries in his organization (LION) that would not be able to afford maintenance charges for their fiber connection and would likely choose a much slower connection from a commercial provider. Colleen Bailie echoed this concern and shared the impact it would have on providing high-speed Internet access to patrons across the state.

Michael Mundrane pointed to the issue of charging libraries with limited budgets for fiber maintenance and suggested that state offsets should cover these costs as a means of ensuring equity of access. He encouraged the group and other CEN stakeholders to look at such charges holistically, blending them across members rather than charging individual institutions based on their distance from the nearest CEN connection, the basis for buildout and maintenance charges. Members have little or no control over such costs, and a blended approach to sharing costs would provide a more equitable solution for all.

Bill Vallee supported the idea and reminded the group that Connecticut towns have not been able to take advantage of national grant programs benefitting rural communities, as no towns in Connecticut qualify as "rural." He also made the argument that CEN provides the State with services such as DDoS and filtering that could qualify for federal "avoided cost" relief. If the Commission could demonstrate through a financial analysis that the State receives "revenue enhancements" because it avoids state-level costs provided by CEN services, then that amount could be justified as a payment from the State to CEN.

Michael agreed that services such as basic connectivity and distributed denial of service (DDoS) remain so central to the delivery of dependable broadband service that the State should cover these line items. They also help ensure public safety services, keeping police and fire departments online and connected to dispatch and other systems.

Subsequent discussion supported the idea of studying the viability of a formal proposal, especially given the 2017 legislative session regarding the State budget.

Rob Wilson of Somers asked about efficiencies in connecting libraries to CEN, whether leveraging existing ties to anchor institutions (e.g., schools) provided efficiencies. Ryan Kocsondy confirmed that this approach of finding the shortest, most resilient, and most cost-effective run to a library, often via a town's board of education, high school, or other CEN point of demarcation.

### CEN Services

The group shifted the discussion from funding to services. As in previous meetings, Advisory Council members weighed in on possible additional services the Network could offer its members. Doug asked Ryan to recount the informal poll that his team conducted at the 2017 CEN Conference May 12. Attendees had the opportunity to vote for possible services the Network could offer across several options or to write in suggestions. Approximately 130 (~30%) of the attendees voted, with the most interest in managed cloud services and managed voice over IP (VoIP). The tallies provide a general sense of interest among all attendees rather than a detailed breakdown of constituent needs. However, the results to reinforce the shift in educational needs away from capital (e.g., hardware) to subscription service models. Ryan and Michael emphasized that ensuring high-quality transport, Internet, filtering, DDoS, and other core services remains CEN's focus. Additional services should present little risk to existing offerings.

Even within the group, members expressed different needs. For example, with the increase in broadband capacity and expansion of wireless capacity in many libraries, Rick pointed to managed wireless and managed firewall as services his constituents need. Kerri Kearney and Rob Wilson indicated strong interest in offsite backup services for the K – 12 community, especially via servers located directly on CEN. The idea of bundling services by constituent type (K – 12, higher education, libraries, municipalities, etc.) appealed to all members of the Advisory Council and held the promise of introducing greater efficiencies than offering many à la carte services to individual members.

Michael suggested that CEN's role as an aggregator rather than direct provider of services might help reduce risk to the Network while providing a broader array of services to its members. He pointed to some of the key drivers for adopting new services as reducing member costs, adding functionality to their operations, and reducing risk to CEN's core services. Ryan provided the example of Eduroam, the higher education credentialing platform, as a relatively low-risk service that CEN could broker but not have to manage directly. Recent discussions with Eduroam indicate an eagerness to support K – 12 customers but at a direct cost to users, a departure from its institutional pricing model.

Other suggestions for new services included Kerri's request for training targeted at field technicians, not just university and school leaders, on current security and networking topics. Rick agreed that additional training would help library technical staff who belong to LION. Kerri and Rick encouraged CEN to continue using social media to communicate training opportunities. Kerri also expressed a need for insights on

educational networking trends, sharing a vision for future opportunities and risks. Security assessments also came up as a valuable service that CEN could offer directly or through a trusted partner.

### Equity

Doug shared a few updates on the Digital Equity Toolkit, highlighting the work that a subgroup of the Advisory Council had completed and likely next steps. He is working directly with Google's education team to identify ways of creating a statewide WiFi hotspot map to assist students with getting online outside of school. Among other design considerations, governance and controlled access to the list of locations remain priorities. As a tool that the Commission develops and shares statewide, we need to ensure that communities contributing to the map have the ability to review and vet proposed hotspot locations.

He also mentioned the willingness of Project Tomorrow's CEO, Julie Evans, to help design a custom survey of broadband access, use, and attitudes, based on her organization's extensive Speak Up survey. As the group has discussed previously, completion rates of the full Speak Up survey remain low, though Joe Campbell points to success he has had with the Technical High Schools to garner responses among 40 percent of parents. His advice was to tie survey completions to access programs such as wireless hotspots that students can borrow to get online outside of school. Messaging has emphasized that parent and student input helps drive the need for such hotspot programs.

Sabina Sitaru shared her work in partnership with the Hartford Public Library to provide mobile hotspots with patrons. The pilot initiative has the potential to grow based on demonstrated need, and she promised to share findings and recommendations from this work to benefit the broader educational community that the Commission members represent.

### Commission Strategic Plan

Doug concluded the meeting by mentioning the development of a strategic plan that includes, among other initiatives, digital equity and the possible expansion of CEN services. He thanked them for their input, which will directly inform the short- and long-term efforts of the Commission.