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STATE OF VERMONT
VERMONT INTERACTIVE WORKING GROUP
SEC. E.602.1 OF ACT 58 OF 2015

Tuesday, November 24, 2015

DRAFT Minutes subject to approval

Members Present: Jim Porter, Kiersten Bourgeois, Rob Chapman, Paul Costello, Representative Kathy Keenan, Marty Reid, John Sayles, Chad Wawrzyniak, and Yasmine Ziesler.

Other Attendees: Joint Fiscal Office and Legislative Council staff, Department of Public Service and Vermont Interactive Technologies staff, media, and various interested members of the public.

The Chair, Jim Porter, convened the meeting at 1:15 p.m. and asked for a motion to accept the October 28 minutes. Paul Costello moved to accept the minutes, and John Sayles seconded the motion. The Working Group passed the motion.

Michelle Hughes, Connectivity Coordinator, and Corey Chase, Telecommunications Infrastructure Specialist, Department of Public Service, gave an update on the Vermont Video Connect alternate proposal, and distributed two handouts. Ms. Hughes explained that the Department was not able to enter into a contractual agreement with the Center for Technology of Education (CTE) sites or Vermont Video Connect without legislative approval. Ms. Hughes stated that they received a genuine interest in the proposal from the CTE sites and others, but expanding to the libraries posed too many challenges. The Chittenden County site did not work out but they would continue to work on a replacement site with the Department of Labor. In response to Representative Keenan, Ms. Hughes explained that sites providing staffing on evenings and weekends would receive a stipend.

A discussion ensued on the move of VIT equipment to the new video connect sites/storage. There were questions on whether VIT was a nonprofit and ownership of the equipment. The Committee agreed that the Capital Bill (Act 26 of 2015) states that the Legislature would determine the fate of the VIT equipment. The Chair informed the Working Group that, in the interim of VIT closure on December 31, 2015 and the reconvening and decision of the Legislature in 2016, the Department of Buildings and General Services would likely store the equipment.

The Working Group discussed the governance structure of the Vermont Video Connect proposal. The Chair suggested that someone from the Group and a representative from each participating site be included in the structure.

The Chair proposed that the draft report circulate to members electronically from Legislative Council for changes to final recommendations and an electronic vote occur on or near December 1, 2015 when the Group ceases to exist.

Mr. Chase added that the essence of the proposal was a 2-prong approach for the equipment. The equipment that could be utilized at the new sites would be moved to those locations, and installed by a contractor with fit-ups for connection to those sites' equipment. The remainder of the equipment would be brought to surplus property or wherever BGS determined.

Mr. Sayles referenced the VIT report, Tilson, and stated it had a detailed analysis of the current system equipment. He added that the Group had voted at a previous meeting to move forward with the exploration of the proposal for the Vermont Video Connect, but that a vote on the draft report recommendations would still require an action. Mr. Costello moved to recommend with Mr. Sayles second and amendment – motion as follows: “In gratitude to Vermont Interactive Technologies’ great work, advance Vermont Video Connect as an idea for keeping service going into the future, recommend that the Legislature continue to explore the Vermont Video Connect as a possibility that will benefit Vermonters.”

In response to questions on cost of next steps of proposal, Mr. Chase explained that rough estimates included a one-time amount of \$100k to move and augment equipment at the new sites, and a possible annual amount of \$100k for staff stipends at the sites.

Ms. Reid reiterated Chair Porter’s comments that there was an urgency to put a new system in place in order not to lose VIT’s current clients that may be willing to transfer to the new system and pay fees for services.

Ms. Royle informed the Group that she would use the handout from the Department to draft final information into the Group’s report and send electronically on Monday, November 30 to the Group for comments and vote.

The Chair reminded the Group of the pending motion, and the Group approved it unanimously. Ms. Reid requested that the report include the discussion on the geographical site locations.

Public comments were heard from Steve Whittaker.

The Committee adjourned at 2:30 p.m. on a motion from Mr. Chapman.

Respectfully Submitted

Theresa Utton-Jerman
Legislative Joint Fiscal Office