

**BEFORE THE WASHINGTON
UTILITIES AND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION**

In the Matter of the Establishment and
Operation of an Advisory Board for the
State Universal Communications Service
Program Pursuant to WAC 480-123-150

DOCKET UT-150067

ORDER 03

APPOINTING ADVISORY BOARD
MEMBERS

BACKGROUND

- 1 The legislature established a state universal communications program (Program) in 2013 to provide targeted financial support to small incumbent telephone companies serving high-cost rural areas in the state of Washington.¹ The Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission (Commission) is responsible for implementing and administering the Program and has adopted rules to fulfill this statutory obligation.²
- 2 As part of its responsibilities, the Commission established an industry and consumer advisory board to provide recommendations to the Commission on the implementation and management of the program.³ The board must be comprised of members who represent each of the following interests:
- Incumbent local exchange companies (ILECs) serving fewer than 40,000 access lines in Washington;
 - ILECs serving more than 40,000 access lines in Washington;
 - Competitive local exchange carriers (CLECs) serving customers in Washington;
 - Wireless communications service providers offering service in Washington;
 - The Public Counsel Unit of the Washington Attorney General's office (Public Counsel);
 - The Governor's State Broadband Office; and
 - Commission staff (Staff).⁴

¹ RCW 80.36.650 – 700.

² WAC 480-123-100 – 170.

³ WAC 480-123-150(1); *accord* RCW 80.36.650(7).

⁴ WAC 480-123-150(2)(a).

3 On January 29, 2015, the Commission entered Order 01, Order Appointing Advisory Board Members and Initiating Meeting (Order 01). In Order 01, the Commission appointed Rick Vitzhum, Mark S. Reynolds, Cindy J. Manheim, and Rhonda Weaver as industry representatives to serve on the advisory board for an initial three-year term, at the end of which the Commission could reappoint those members for two subsequent three-year terms.⁵ Public Counsel and Staff representatives have permanent membership on the advisory board and have no restrictions on the amount of time they serve on the board.

4 On January 25, 2018, the Commission entered Order 02, Order Reappointing Advisory Board Members (Order 02). In Order 02, the Commission reappointed Rick Vitzhum, Mark S. Reynolds, Cindy J. Manheim, and Rhonda Weaver to serve on the advisory board for a subsequent three-year term.

5 In 2019, the legislature extended the Program through June 30, 2024, and added broadband as a supported service. The Commission initiated a rulemaking in Docket UT-190437 and filed General Order R-598 on May 27, 2020, adopting revised rules that went into effect on June 27, 2020. The new rules expand board membership to include a representative from the Governor's State Broadband Office and authorize the Commission secretary to determine and modify the number of seats on the board.

DISCUSSION AND DECISION

6 The industry board members' current three-year term expires January 24, 2021. The Commission has been well served by all board members, and all except one of the appointed board members have expressed a willingness to serve an additional three-year term. William Bridges, with CenturyLink, is willing to serve as a representative of ILECs with more than 40,000 access lines. Russ Elliott, Director of the Governor's State Broadband Office, is willing to fill the newly created opening. Jing Roth, as the telecommunications Assistant Director continues to be the appropriate representative for Staff, and Lisa Gafken is still the appropriate representative for Public Counsel.

7 Accordingly, the Commission appoints the following persons to membership on the board to complete the current three year term ending January 24, 2021, and to serve a new three-year term starting January 25, 2021, effective August 27, 2020:

⁵ WAC 480-123-150(2)(b).

Advisory Board Membership	
ILECs serving fewer than 40,000 access lines in Washington (Three year term)	Rick Vitzhum, Chief Financial Officer, Kalama Telephone Company and Tenino Telephone Company
ILECs serving more than 40,000 access lines in Washington (Three year term)	William Bridges, Director - State Legislative & Regulatory Affairs, CenturyLink
CLECs serving customers in Washington (Three year term)	Rhonda Weaver, Senior Director - State Government Affairs, Comcast
Wireless communications providers offering service in Washington (Three year term)	Cindy J. Manheim, General Attorney, AT&T
Governor's State Broadband Office	Russ Elliott, Director
Public Counsel	Lisa Gafkin, Assistant Attorney General
Staff	Jing Roth, Assistant Director, Regulatory Services Division

8 The Commission appoints Jing Roth as the chair of the advisory board. Chair Roth will establish the date and time of the next board meeting in consultation with the other board members. All meetings of the advisory board will take place at the Commission's office located at 621 Woodland Square Loop SE, Lacey, Washington, or virtually using the Microsoft Teams platform so long as the Commission remains closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The board chair will prepare and provide notice of the agenda no later than one week prior to meeting.

ORDER

THE COMMISSION ORDERS:

- 9 (1) Membership of the advisory board shall be as set forth in this Order.
- 10 (2) The chair of the advisory board will schedule annual board meetings and will prepare and provide notice of the agenda no later than one week in advance of the meeting.
- 11 (3) The Commission retains jurisdiction over this matter to take such future actions as may be appropriate.

12 The Commissioners, having determined this Order to be consistent with the public interest, directed the Secretary to enter this Order.

DATED at Lacey, Washington, and effective August 27, 2020.

WASHINGTON UTILITIES AND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

MARK L. JOHNSON
Executive Director and Secretary