

**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 04

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
- 3 On January 29, 2015, the Commission entered Order 01, Order Appointing Advisory Board Members, and Initiating Meeting (Order 01) in this Docket. In Order 01, the

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).

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 this Docket. 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 entered General Order R-598 on May 27, 2020, adopting revised rules that became effective 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.

6 On August 27, 2020, the Commission entered Order 03, Order Appointing Advisory Board Members (Order 03) in this Docket. In Order 03, the Commission appointed William Bridges and Russ Elliott to serve on the advisory board and reappointed Rick Vitzhum, Mark S. Reynolds, Cindy J. Manheim, and Rhonda Weaver to serve on the advisory board for a subsequent three-year term.

DISCUSSION AND DECISION

7 Three board members are unable to serve the remainder of the three-year term. We thank these board members for their service and the Commission has been well served by these members. Three individuals have expressed a willingness to serve the remainder of their predecessor's three-year term that started January 25, 2021. Peter Gose, with CenturyLink, is willing to serve as a representative of ILECs with more than 40,000 access lines. Carl Gipson, with AT&T, is willing to serve as a representative of wireless communications service providers. Erika Henry, Deputy Director of the Governor's State Broadband Office, is willing to serve on behalf of that agency. Jing Roth, as the Commission's Assistant Director, telecommunications, continues to be the appropriate representative for Staff, and Lisa Gafken is still the appropriate representative for Public Counsel.

⁵ WAC 480-123-150(2)(b).

8 Accordingly, the Commission appoints the following persons to membership on the board to complete the current three-year term ending January 24, 2024:

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)	Peter Gose, Regulatory Affairs Director - Northwest Region, CenturyLink/Lumen
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)	Carl Gipson, Director – External and Legislative Affairs – Washington AT&T
Governor’s State Broadband Office	Erika Henry, Deputy Director
Public Counsel	Lisa Gafken, Assistant Attorney General
Staff	Jing Roth, Assistant Director, Telecommunications, Regulatory Services Division

9 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 or Zoom platform.

ORDER

THE COMMISSION ORDERS:

- 10 (1) Membership of the advisory board shall be as set forth in this Order.
- 11 (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.
- 12 (3) The Commission retains jurisdiction over this matter to take such future actions as may be appropriate.

The Secretary has been delegated authority to enter this order on behalf of the Commissioners under WAC 480-07-904(1).

DATED at Lacey, Washington, and effective January 18, 2022

WASHINGTON UTILITIES AND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

AMANDA MAXWELL
Executive Director and Secretary

NOTICE TO PARTIES: This is an order delegated to the Executive Secretary for decision. As authorized in WAC 480-07-904(3), you must file any request for Commission review of this order no later than 14 days after the date the decision is posted on the Commission's website.