

**CONNECT NEW MEXICO COUNCIL MEETING**  
**Hybrid, Roundhouse, 411 S. Capitol Street, Room 311**  
**Santa Fe, NM 87501**  
**Thursday, September 21, 2023, 1:30 – 3:30 PM**

**1. WELCOME AND CALL TO ORDER**

Video recording time: 00:00:03

The meeting of the Connect New Mexico Council was called to order by Renee Narvaiz, at 1:36 pm, on Thursday, September 21, 2023, in Santa Fe, New Mexico. Ms. Narvaiz introduced herself and reviewed general rules and procedures regarding the meeting.

**MEMBERS PRESENT-**

Kimball Sekaquaptewa, Chair	Steve Grey
Luis Reyes, Co-Chair	Eli Guinnee
Secretary Peter Mantos	Katherine Crociata
Ovidiu Viorica	Godfrey Enjady (joined later after roll call)
Jim Ruybal	

**MEMBERS ABSENT-**

Nora Sackett	Bogi Malecki
Leonard Manzanares	Launa Waller
Joseph Navarrete	Tico Charlee

**OTHERS PRESENT**

Renee Narvaiz, DoIT, PIO  
Natalie Runyan, GIS  
Vanessa Willock, Sandeep Taxali, Gar Clarke, Jerrold, Gail Long (TDS), Ohkay-Owingeh IT, Joe Martinez, Mitch Hibbard, Eugene Evans, Jerry Smith, John DiRuggiero, Marcos Krohn, Kathy Korte, Carlos Herrera, Jeff Albright, Christine Bustos, Jen Somers, Nathan Cogburn, Cameron Graham (AARP).

**2. APPROVAL OF MEETING AGENDA AND MINUTES**

Video recording time: 00:01:37

Ms. Narvaiz noted that the request for Mr. Gagnon from OBAE to speak about the \$5 million grant application form was not received in time to include in today's agenda. Chair Sekaquaptewa commented that it could be included under item #8.

**MOTION** A motion was made by Mr. Reyes and seconded by Mr. Guinnee/Mr. Viorica to approve the agenda as presented.

**VOTE** No opposition, motion passed.

**MOTION:** Ms. Narvaiz called for a motion to approve the minutes of the August 17, 2023, noting she had received a request from Mr. Viorica for a few edits for clarity. A motion was made by Mr. Reyes to approve the minutes, with edits provided by Mr. Viorica, and seconded by Ms. Crociata.

**VOTE** No opposition, motion passed.

**3. CHAIR UPDATES/COMMENTS**

Video recording time: 00:03:13

Chair Sekaquaptewa - Welcomed everyone to the meeting. Ms. Sekaquaptewa reported that she just returned from an Eight Northern Pueblos engagement which was attended by OBAE staff. She commented about the participation of the OBAE staff with respect to explaining details of where things are with broadband, being supportive and engaging the tribes as part of the BEAD planning,

getting to know the people in the communities who will be putting together the application, and expressed her appreciation for this effort. She noted that the Ramah celebration occurred yesterday and that in the pilot round three, five tribal projects were awarded, one of which was with the Jemez Mountain Co-Op, including some parts of one of the northern pueblos. These celebrations are ongoing and Ms. Sekaquaptewa congratulated these awardees.

Ms. Sekaquaptewa announced the departure of Broadband Department Director, Kelly Schlegel. Ms. Sekaquaptewa expressed appreciation for all of Ms. Schlegel's work and the team she has brought into the department, who will carry the work of the broadband project forward. She specifically noted Ms. Schlegel's work with respect to building up statewide resources, including staffing, technical assistance, submission of federal applications, etc. Ms. Sekaquaptewa expressed thanks to Ms. Schlegel and her family for the time they all committed to this department.

Ms. Sekaquaptewa welcomed Drew Lovelace as the Interim Director, who she believed would allow the department to "not miss a step" moving forward, expressing support for him as he takes over this role. She noted that Mr. Lovelace was not in attendance today as he was still at the Eight Northern Pueblos event with the OBAE team.

#### **4. Rulemaking update – Ovidiu Viorica, Tribal/State Collaboration Act Amendment**

Video recording time: 00:06:39

Sekaquaptewa - Asked if Ms. Willock could give this update.

Viorica - Screen shared the items for review.

1) Willock - Reported that there will be tribal collaboration language added which was discussed in the working group, and this is highlighted on the screen share. This is for consideration by this Council and requires a sponsoring body to comply with the New Mexico State Tribal Collaboration Act. This is the first piece of the amendment to the rulemaking.

2) Ms. Willock asked Mr. Viorica to scroll down further and then reviewed the second part which is a clarification on the rule to bring it into alignment with SB377 for 2021. She explained that when the rule was finalized it unfortunately left out two entities, electric cooperatives and telephone cooperatives, for purposes of being eligible to receive funding. This amendment is to clarify and make sure it is in alignment with SB277

Willock - This is a high-level review of what these two changes are in the rule. She stated that if this Council chooses to make these changes the Tribal Collaboration would take the beginning of the rule-making process again, but the whole rule would not have to be put out for public comment, only the sections being adjusted.

Sekaquaptewa - Asked if there would be a 30-day open comment period. Ms. Willock responded that this is correct.

Reyes – Does this apply to distribution electric co-ops as there are two transmission co-ops, which are electric co-ops.

Willock - SB377 provided \$5 million from the General Fund for grants to local governments, tribes, electric cooperatives and telephone cooperatives for strategic planning and grant writing support. This funding is for that support.

Reyes – Asked for clarification of the definition of electric co-op. There are 16 electric co-ops in the state, five or six of which are engaged in broadband at this time. However, there are two

transmission electric co-ops. Just trying to clarify if this is specific to distribution electric co-ops or if the transmission co-ops serving those distribution co-ops are included.

Willcock – Looking through the beginning of the bill for that clarification. May have to get back to Mr. Reyes on this if a definition is not provided in the bill.

Reyes – That would be fine. Just wants to be sure.

Willcock – Does not appear to be defined in the bill so will do some additional research to answer Mr. Reyes' question.

Sekaquaptewa – For context, when looking at the assistance grants roll out it was noted that the Senate Bill was not accurately mirrored in this document and believes there was some concern about public/private partnerships and giving funds to private entities. Not sure what category these cooperatives would fall in. Some of these concerns were mitigated in the last legislative session so the intent in updating item 6 is to match the statute that was passed to enable these resources. Not sure what approach to take if these were not appropriately defined.

Reyes – Believes it would be more inclusive because they own transmission facilities that may be utilized to reach more rural areas. Wants to be sure the transmission co-ops are included.

Willcock – In her opinion the existing language allows for broad definition.

Reyes – Thanked Ms. Willcock for her explanation.

Sekaquaptewa – Any further questions or comments?

Crociata – This was intended to be broad. Offered to discuss with Mr. Reyes further offline if he would like. Her understanding is that there is no specific definition already in statute, so was not added in this instance on purpose.

Reyes – Agreed to discuss further offline. Is fine with moving forward on this as presented. Believes it is urgent to begin making decisions as the BEAD money is rolling out and there is not much time.

Sekaquaptewa – Will be discussed later in the agenda as to how quickly funds will be rolling out. Returning to the tribal language portion Ms. Sekaquaptewa read the screen share for those who are on the phone and cannot see the final language. After reading this she commented that this is a step beyond, making sure there is compliance with the New Mexico State Tribal Collaboration Act, which is important in the government to government relations with the tribes, but also addresses the language which is part of the NTIA requirements and also best practice as discussed in the Tribal Working Group. Having Tribal Consent at the beginning of an application will lead to increased success of private completion and due to the geography of the state this can enable not only tribal connections but outlets to connect rural New Mexico. Secondly, with certification of the project area there is a reference to underserved and unserved which are in alignment with the mapping and measurement of connectivity nationwide with respect to the funding. This also includes certification concerning tribally approved network build-up commitments and the language aligns with expectations from NTIA. This will allow protection for the state in a challenge situation.

Any further questions or comments?

Enjady – Asked what mapping/process will be for tribal self-certification. Concerned about overlap condition that could stop a whole project. Would like to mitigate this potential at the beginning.

Sekaquaptewa – For federal funding will be FCC map. State funding specifications have not been discussed. Could use State map, but may need to leave this more general. Asked Mr. Viorica for his input.

Viorica – Rules certainly contemplate awards associated with BEAD as well as state funding for infrastructure deployment providing internet service. Believes rules cover much broader areas. He recommends covering specific requirements in the NOFO. Rules must be broader, probably not a good place for information regarding what maps, eligibility, etc. Rules will cover more than just infrastructure deployment and internet service; may cover digital equity, other types of devices, affordability, etc., which may not necessarily pertain to any map.

Sekaquaptewa – Is it Mr. Viorica’s recommendation to leave this broad with further clarification to be added after the NOFOs for federal or state projects come out?

Viorica – Correct. Keep it broader. Including specifics related to the type of funding and specific requirements in the NOFOs.

Sekaquaptewa – Asked Mr. Enjady if he had any follow-up questions or comments.

Enjady – Wants to make sure clarification is made with respect to the self-certification process for tribes. Concerned about sovereignty issues. Wants to make sure tribes are upheld to this.

Sekaquaptewa – Is he asking for the wording “tribal self-certification” to be worked into this sentence?

Enjady – Yes. This would be the same as the self-certification process RUS has allowed for the grant-making process, also as with NTIA. Wants to be in unison with that, so no surprises for anyone.

Sekaquaptewa – So instead of where the wording is “the tribal consent must note whether the project area is unserved or underserved”, perhaps it should say “tribal self-certification must note whether the project area is unserved or underserved”; is that okay?

Enjady – Fine with me.

Runyan – Could perhaps read, “the tribal consent, including self-certification”.

Sekaquaptewa – Tribal consent and self-certification?

Runyan – Unsure. Will they all be doing a self-certified version?

Sekaquaptewa – If a tribe is applying on their own then the self-certification would be a component. Two topics to Mr. Enjady’s point. Tribal consent assumes someone else is applying on tribal land. The sentence before addresses the Certificate of Consent from Tribal Council, so perhaps, period, space, new idea, and then “tribal application will include self-certification noting whether the project area...”? Thinks both concerns have been covered.

Any further questions or concerns? None.

Called for vote to adopt this language.

Enjady – So moved.

Reyes – Seconded.

No opposition. Motion carried.

Viorica – Clarification; motion included both modifications?

Sekaquaptewa – Yes.

## **5. Connect New Mexico Pilot Program – Sandeep Taxali**

Video Recording time: 00:25:44

Taxali – Currently attending the Eight Northern Pueblos event.

Gave overview of the program, noting it began in August 2022, funded by the American Rescue Plan Act, specifically the Capital Projects Fund. Noted support received from the U.S. Dept. of the Treasury, which oversees this fund which provides funds to the State, with the State Legislature allocating \$117 million for the program. Reviewed purpose of the program, which is to foster deployment of broadband access across unserved and underserved areas throughout New Mexico with sustainable, scalable networks and viable business plans which will serve the comprehensive community with high-quality, reasonably priced solutions. Noted this is a very rich purpose, touching on many points.

Described the review process which involves a three-phased approach per the NOFO; 1) application review team of three to four members which review the applications, 2) due diligence, and 3) leadership, including the Governor's Office.

Wave One was funded last year with Wave Two funded earlier this year, with funding of \$49.4 million, leaving \$67.5 million. In the last batch of 11 projects there were three Wave Two projects which were still under due diligence when Wave Three started. These three Wave Two projects were awarded \$21.5 million, leaving \$46 million for Wave Three. In Wave Three there were grant requests of approximately \$134 million, so this was heavily oversubscribed which could be good and bad, meaning there will be some very good projects competing for funding, but also means there will be a lot of work to determine the best projects.

Of note, the Wave Two project for Western New Mexico was rescinded after being announced, due to some open issues which could not be resolved by the Board and the management team. This leaves additional funding for Wave Three projects.

A press release was issued a few weeks ago and they have been on tour throughout the state visiting communities which received awards, participating in several award celebrations, including Ramah Navajo with the Oso Internet Project, Santo Domingo and Jemez Mountain Electric Co-op, Laguna, etc.

There have been three projects in Wave 2 and eight in Wave 3, which all involve the deployment of fiber, in alignment with the Treasury guidelines to the states to encourage the deployment of fiber. These projects reflect diversity in terms of entities and regions of the state. In the process of due diligence, they have been able to lower budgets and/or increase the matching contributions for all but one small project. This has enabled maximization of the number of projects awarded.

Major theme of Wave Three is recognition of the strong need and strong proposals from the Native American communities. As Chair has mentioned there are seven projects which directly touch Native American communities, with five pueblos receiving awards; Jemez, Laguna, Nambe, Santa Ana and Santo Domingo, and Ohkay-Owingeh will receive coverage through the Jemez Mountain Electric Co-Op project and Ramah Navajo and the Navajo Nation will receive connectivity through Oso Internet.

Two projects in San Juan County will be built by Comcast off the existing cable plan that Comcast currently operates in Aztec and Bloomfield.

Wave Two awardee, Tularosa, came back with another strong project in Wave Three, serving Dog Canyon and Dog Ranch, in Otero County. Sunspot was included in this application but this could not be funded currently, but hopefully will be included in the future. Another project funded was for New Mexico Valley Telephone Cooperative for the town of Hagerman, in Chaves County.

Asked Chair if he should recount the awarded projects at this time.

Sekaquaptewa – Could a list be posted on the website?

Taxali – Yes, there is a press release available which lists all the projects. PR team will soon have a website that lists all projects and will share quarterly project reports filed on behalf of these projects. All award amounts and awardees are currently on the Connect New Mexico website.

Sekaquaptewa – This is at <https://connect.nm.gov>, correct?

Taxali – Yes. Gave some details regarding recent awardees with respect to Dept. of Treasury guidelines encouraging states to fund co-ops, nonprofits and other firms that have a longer-term horizon in terms of payback/return, such as the Jemez Mountain Electric Co-Op project and their partnership with Ohkay-Owingeh Pueblo

(Mr. Viorica screen-shared list of Pueblo Projects and Awards as Mr. Taxali reviewed.)

Reviewed other projects not yet awarded but still under consideration; Comcast in Dona Ana County and San Juan County/Aztec/Bloomfield.

Noted strength of the Laguna Pueblo application. Commented that all five pueblos who submitted applications have previous experience being their own ISP through fixed wireless and are now extending that into fiber to the premises/fiber-based broadband.

Commented that a question had arisen with respect to tribal projects needing recurring OpEx support, however, Laguna has assured that they have internal funding to manage their OpEx needs in the future, which is very strong.

Reviewed details of other projects including Santo Domingo, Jemez Pueblo, Nambe Pueblo, Santa Ana Pueblo, Penasco Valley Telephone Cooperative and Oso Internet/Ramah Navajo.

Will be debriefing all of the other projects submitted in Wave Three with respect to challenges found in the review process. Pilot project basically wrapped up but until all award agreements are signed these funds remain technically available. Will report on the award agreements in

the near future.

Next steps will be to apply lessons learned from the pilot program into developing the Connect New Mexico fund and the BEAD program, as well as anything else that may develop in the future.

Sekaquaptewa – Thanked Mr. Taxali for the detailed recap. Heard certain themes, such as the importance of collaboration and reviewed examples. Further questions?

Viorica – Complimented Mr. Taxali for his presentation. Reviewed some numbers to highlight the significance of this work. All projects across the three waves will include approximately 1,450 miles of new fiberoptic installation, which is significant, 26,112 locations served by high-speed, relatively affordable internet (with application of available subsidies), federal funding and matching funds combined for a total of approximately \$190 Million dollars and will probably take three years to complete. This will be a tremendous amount of work considering all of the steps required and will take everyone collaborating to accomplish this. This is a good start moving into the BEAD process to get the rest of this work done.

## **6. Mapping Update – Natalie Runyan, Peter Mantos**

Video Recording time: 00:54:24

Sekaquaptewa – Asked Mr. Mantos or Ms. Runyan to speak to this, noting there was a deadline on Friday, in which there might be notice of the implications at present.

Runyan – Working group has been discussing high-cost areas that NTIA published and shared the boundaries, which OBAE should have in the grants map soon. Have worked on their membership and shared notetaking resources. Many logistical problems being resolved. Reviewing what has been funded to be clear on what would be considered an overbuilt and document this for clarity. Need to get speed & subscription status for schools and libraries from Mr. Guinnee. Question for Mr. Guinnee; Is there a BE for libraries, someone she should be...?

Guinnee – Thinks he knows what she is referring to. Will send her an email.

Runyan – Public maps are still showing old service availabilities. Due to lapse in a contract the map has not been updated but new data has been published, which is ready to put in the public map, will hopefully be updated in the next week. Currently piloting three of the secure data consortiums she had been following, one of which is in the Dona Ana County area of interest. Otero County has approached her to do the same thing and something like this may also be set up for the Navajo Nation based on some service availability data questions that have arisen. In the process of giving user accounts to people in an area of interest so they are able to access our mapping environment to do data challenges. She is participating in the tribal taskforce and they are working toward developing a map or dashboard demonstrating progress toward goals for Tribal Broadband Connectivity Program grant submission, connectivity status and sustainability status.

She presented a high-level overview of the GIS work done by OBAE over the past year at the New Mexico Tech Summit. She has this presentation available for anyone interested.

Work continues on the statistical analysis of the Ookla speed test status, data designed to help monitor the real experience versus the claims of service availability. Also compiling numbers for the annual Data Collection Report to the state, which will be helpful summary numbers. Starting to get the send data into the GIS which internal staff can use for planning.

With respect to digital equity, they have been scripting the distance sensitive information from the American Communities Survey data into the database and this is all in preparation for establishing the digital equity targetable objectives and will be giving a presentation of the baseline data for the covered populations in the DE working group on October 5<sup>th</sup>.

Initial Proposal for BEAD Volume 1 allocation; requires submission of methodologies, have been readying document for public comment along with CTC guidance. The state challenge for BEAD will be open for organizations, not individuals. Working on methods for individual challenges that might be aggregated by an organization. Decided to focus our skills on the education process and hire out the challenge tool itself. Have seen presentations from two vendors and awaiting proposals from them.

Annamia working on update to state funding data compilation with respect to expenditures. Data group and JS group will apply that data against the map data with the goal being two things; submission of enforceable commitment with the initial proposal and update of public maps with all the grant award areas and details.

Gave further details regarding audit of community institutions in preparation for state challenge process.

Received results from the adjudication of the previous location challenges. Conducted a self-sampling of those rejections and believe approximately 10% of the rejections by FCC do not have a good reason for the rejection. This is about 4,000 locations. These are being submitted to FCC for clarification of the rejections.

Sekaquaptewa – Any questions?

Taxali – Wanted to recognize Gar Clarke, who is on the call today, who was the face of the Broadband Office when he joined in February 2022. Noted how friendly, encouraging, respectful and informative about the institutional history of the office he has been. Thanked Mr. Clarke for being a great support to him and others.

Clarke – Thanked Mr. Taxali for his kind words, very appreciative. Glad things are going very well.

Sekaquaptewa – Echoed Mr. Taxali's appreciation for Mr. Clarke. Noted that the state map that Mr. Clarke began developing was already at a residential level or premise level as opposed to some of the federal maps, so when the federal maps started making that change New Mexico was already five steps ahead, thanks to Mr. Clarke's leadership.

## **7. BEAD Planning Update – Joann Hovis, Drew Lovelace**

Video recording time: 01:05:54

Sekaquaptewa – No one on from CTC today. Will give quick synopsis.

Five year Strategic Plan due at end of August was successfully submitted on time. Unfortunately, this Council was not involved in any preview or review and unable to share comments given the tight deadline.

CTC working on Initial Proposal, which will include procedural framework related to challenges, eligibility, technologies, definitions, etc. This is due December 27<sup>th</sup>. Would like to work toward being able to see this ahead of submission deadline. Asked Council to provide meaningful



comment when it does become available so their subject matter expertise will be reflected in the document.

Final Proposal will be due a year later and will include the actual list of projects that New Mexico has decided to fund with NTIA's final approval and authorization to release the projects into implementation.

Additional questions or comments?

Viorica – Unprecedented project. Has never been done by the federal government, states or industry before. The Federal government still writing the guidance. All entities will have to come together to achieve this. Noted certain challenges. Volume 1 for the Initial Proposal will be out for public comment in the coming weeks and encouraged everyone to participate and provide input. The Final Proposal will include the methodology on how the BEAD funding will be distributed. There will be a meeting tomorrow with ISPs, electric co-ops and others who will be involved in the development of projects to solicit their help and input. This meeting will be at 10:00 a.m. in Albuquerque at the African-American Performing Arts Center on the State Fairgrounds. Anyone interested may attend.

Concerned about cataloging anchor institutions, community anchors and their current service. This list is due by December 27<sup>th</sup>, the due date for the Initial Proposal. He believes the estimate for these would be close to 10,000 locations throughout the state; fire stations, municipal buildings, senior centers, schools, libraries, correctional institutions, etc. Most likely to have information on existing service for schools and libraries, which he believes is approximately 10% of the total, so there are a lot left to catalog. This was not part of the FCC information previously captured so the state will have to collect this information. Asked anyone with knowledge of connectivity to community anchors throughout the state to provide as much information as possible during this input process. This will be important moving forward as additional funding becomes available and updates become necessary.

Sekaquaptewa – A lot of important moving parts. Appreciates the increased staffing of the OBAE office.

## 8. **Updates from OBAE – Natalie Runyan**

Video recording time: 01:12:44

### a) OBAE Director Transition and Staffing Update

Had a seamless transition with Mr. Lovelace moving into his new position as Acting Director on Monday. He has maintained the Director's schedule, including a meeting with staff, attending an awards ceremony to Oso Internet and attending the Eight Northern Pueblos event today.

Socorro Salazar has joined the office as the State Funds Financial Coordinator. Her primary responsibility will be contracts and vendors.

Lee Gagnon has stepped up into the position of Manager of Programs and Compliance. He has submitted an offer letter to acquire a tribal coordinator and has set up interviews for a digital equity coordinator.

Two other job postings for coordinators have closed and interviews are being scheduled in the near future.

Job posting for three additional project managers recently closed. Those candidates

are currently being interviewed.

OBAE still needs to post vacant positions for the project management office manager, HR, public information officer and customer service representative.

Sekaquaptewa – The office is already at 17, including contractors, compared to a year ago, when there was only one. Huge strides.

Runyan – Yes.

Tribal engagements are nearing completion, underscoring commitment to fostering strong relationships with tribal partners, notably the Eight Northern Pueblos event today and in the process of finalizing arrangements for Santa Ana Pueblo in early October.

Mr. Taxali currently drafting a concise overview of the \$70 million infrastructure grant and will present to the rulemaking working group in two weeks. Once those two programs have been set up OBAE will move on to the \$25 million school broadband infrastructure grant.

Mr. Lovelace sends his regards and apologies for missing the meeting and looks forward to being present at the next one.

b) Technical Assistance Funds for Tribes – Lee Gagnon

Gave presentation of the \$5 million grant making portal being built through the Grants Management System, called “Submittable”. Mr. Gagnon screen-shared the portal and noted that this grant-making program was done to ensure that the state was in compliance with Title I, Chapter 12, part 21 of the grant-making rules. Because this is an assistance grant the development team is also following Section 10 of those grant program rules, which states there needs to be a justification order as an order or resolution in place 21 days prior to awards. He noted that this form complies with all of those rules and care was taken to include fields that satisfy these rules. This has been reviewed by Ms. Schlegel, Mr. Lovelace and Ms. Willock prior to this meeting. He then gave a detailed description and overview of the portal, which is a web-based platform with a very user-friendly interface to apply for grants.

Sekaquaptewa – After application is submitted is there a targeted turnaround time? If they are selected then what is the process to do the electronic disbursement?

Gagnon – His role is limited to setting up the portal. Does not know who the selection panel will be or what the requested turnaround time will be. Believes the review committee has the power to use this information instantly. May not actually function as “real-time”, refreshes at midnight so all submissions received in that calendar day will be available the next day. Once the open and close periods of the portal are determined by leadership, no further applications can be submitted and the scoring process will begin the next day after closing the portal.

Sekaquaptewa – Is it possible that there would be a rolling application deadline as well?

Gagnon – Would assume so. Would want to have a start and close date and re-analyze any available funds to see if provision needs to be made for an additional wave. Could see possibility of rolling applications until funds are exhausted.

Viorica – Great work. Expressed appreciation for the team putting this together on an accelerated schedule. Is it known if the Grant Authorization Order has to be issued by the Connect New Mexico Council, the Office of Broadband or both? This is a time-sensitive process, targeting specific grant applications. Would like to see all the tribes apply for the Tribal Connectivity Program 2.0, with a deadline of January 23, 2024. With intervening holidays need to have this available as soon as possible. Sponsoring body would have to have Authorization Order issued as quickly as feasible. This would be a priority for everyone.

Second question is related to SAM.gov. SAM.gov process is “a pain”. So if applicants do not know what that number is or they have to create one, this will be time consuming and resource intensive requiring several steps. He would notify everyone if they do not have a SAM.gov number they should start the process now. Looking at prioritizing applications for the Tribal Connectivity Program, but also other sources of funding so he would like to see this issue available as soon as possible. Asked if the Council can do anything to facilitate this and encouraged to do whatever is necessary to move this forward.

Sekaquaptewa – Something with the SAM.gov registration changed in the requirements for NTIA applicants. Will have to think on this.

Questioned how to frame the question about matching funds; needs to be balanced.

Does everyone have a New Mexico Tax ID number? Do tribes have one as well? Is this something applicants will also have to apply for? Questioned this as a mandatory field in the portal.

Gagnon – When the tax ID field was added to the form Mr. Lovelace had stated that anyone who does business with the State of New Mexico has to have this in place so based on that information he believed all applicants would have this in place, but will double-check, especially to see if tribal governments would not have this, which in that case it should not be a required field.

Can reword the question regarding matching funds and did so live in the meeting. Match certainly not required and will not affect the application. This is for technical assistance.

Sekaquaptewa – Just coming out of the pilot where that has been a strong component applicants might jump to that same conclusion, that this would be important for points for funding.

Any further comments?

Viorica – With regard to SAM.gov, which could be a stumbling block, this is state funding so is having a SAM.gov number a requirement? Perhaps for future applications this might be necessary and would encourage development of this, but if this is not a requirement here because this is 100% state funding, he would recommend removing this. Whatever can be done to simplify the application increases the chance that more people will apply.

Gagnon – The UEI is mandatory to receive any sort of federal funding, so if this \$5 million is from a federal source it would be necessary. If this is state-sourced funds and

the state was not funded from a federal source for this, then the UEI is not required. In that case the BTIN might be needed. Getting more feedback on that will be important and he will follow up on this to get information for the Council.

Sekaquaptewa – Yes, please look into this for consistency. There is the whole question of if the federal funds go to the state is it now state funding. Have had this conversation with respect to other components of the funding stream, in particular the ARPA funds.

Thanked Mr. Gagnon for standing this portal up so quickly. This feels doable. Need to get the funding out and start developing these projects.

Restated situation mentioned earlier by Mr. Viorica, noting that for decades, in spite of previous FCC efforts, much of New Mexico, in particular the tribal nations, remained unconnected and now NTIA is presenting this opportunity as states to do in less than two years what the world did not do for broadband in the United States. Part of that is this project development. Will take a lot of work and collaboration to develop \$675 million worth of excellent projects ready for implementation by the time the Final Proposal is due in approximately 18 months. This is the first critical step, getting this technical assistance to start building those projects.

c) State Digital Equity - \$1M

Sekaquaptewa – This was used for the Digital Equity Planning process, so is not a publicly available fund. Completion of this process will open the door for the grant program next year.

Runyan – Drew asked her to share that the DE Plan was released August 1<sup>st</sup> and will be incorporated under the State Three-Year Strategic Plan per statute, so that will be in January.

Sekaquaptewa – Thanked Ms. Runyan for the update.

**9. Public Comment:**

Video recording time: 01:39:29

Sekaquaptewa – Called for public comment. There was none.

**10. Adjournment:**

Video recording time: 01:39:55

Motion for adjournment was made by Mr. Viorica and seconded by Mr. Enjady

No opposition, meeting adjourned at 3:17 p.m.