ARKANSAS AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

Zoom Meeting

Thursday, September 9, 2021 – 3:30pm

IN ATTENDANCE

**STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

Larry Walther, Secretary, Department of Finance & Administration

Johnny Key, Secretary, Department of Education

Cindy Gillespie, Secretary, Department of Human Services

Mike Preston, Secretary, Department of Commerce

Wes Ward, Secretary, Department of Agriculture

A.J. Gary, Director of the Arkansas Department of Emergency Management

Stacy Hurst, Secretary, Department of Parks, Heritage & Tourism

Daryl Bassett, Secretary, Department of Labor & Licensing

Dr. Jose Romero, Secretary, Department of Health

Senator Bill Sample

Senator Keith Ingram

Senator Ronald Caldwell

Representative Kenneth Ferguson Representative Jeff Wardlaw

Representative Frances Cavenaugh

**ADDITIONAL ATTENDEES**

Alan McVey, Chief of Staff, Department of Finance and Administration

Paul Louthian, Deputy Director, Department of Finance and Administration

**AGENDA**

1. Welcome and Opening Remarks – Secretary Walther
2. Approval of Minutes – Secretary Larry Walther
3. Department of Commerce Request

* Secretary Mike Preston – Department of Commerce

1. Next Meeting September 22nd at 3:30pm

Adjournment

**WELCOME AND OPENING REMARKS**

Secretary Larry Walther welcomed the committee to the meeting and called the meeting to order.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Secretary Larry Walther presented the minutes from the August 25 and August 26, 2021 meetings. *Senator Bill Sample motioned to approve; Secretary Stacy Hurst provided a second; Secretary Walther called for a vote; the minutes were approved.*

**DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE REQUEST**

Secretary Walther introduced Secretary Mike Preston to talk about his request presented to the committee.

Secretary Preston started by thanking the legislature in getting approval of projects done a couple weeks ago through ALC. The request will provide an extension of the CTEH/Hagerty contract to provide assistance in the Broadband Office. In addition to the support from UAMS, we will have support from the team that is helping DFA to allow us to manage this program as it goes forward. He continued to say that what they have in front of them today is something that the executive branch, Broadband Office, and the legislature have been talking about pulling all of this together for a “one broadband strategy” and a comprehensive plan that they will continue to work from. He reminded the committee that time is of the essence, and they need to move as quickly as possible. He also stated they need to be as deliberate as possible with the spending the limited amount of funds to build broadband in the most advantageous way. Secretary Preston then explained that he is requesting up to $4 million from the ARP funds to be spent for this consultant once the final determination is made of who it will be to provide the state with the strategic broadband plan moving forward.

Secretary Preston then turned the floor over the Secretary Hurst who stated she did not have anything to add, but that she would answer any questions the committee had.

Senator Caldwell asked if the consultant election process will go through the ALC if approved, to which Secretary Hurst answered that the request for appropriation will be on the ALC agendas and will go to PEER for review on Monday and the contract will go to the ALC chairs for review and approval. Senator Caldwell asked if the consultant had been selected yet, to which Secretary Hurst replied that it had not.

Secretary Hurst answered stating Senator Irvin sent the contract for revision and will be reviewed and approved by ALC chair members.

Senator Ingram stated that we had already approved $2.5 million for the consultant, and questioned that the amount being asked for was it just the $4 million or was it $6.5 million?

Secretary Preston answered by stating the previous $2.5 million was to hire CTEH/Hagerty to help in the assistance and consulting in the broadband office. The $4 million requested today would give funds to hire the consultant to develop a comprehensive master plan for statewide broadband implementation and help us achieve our mutual goal of increased connectivity within Arkansas.

*Secretary Walther entertained a motion to approve; Secretary Hurst motioned to approve; Senator Ingram provided a second; Secretary Walther called for a vote; the motion passed.*

**SCHEDULING OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting will be held Wednesday, September 22, 2021 at 3:30pm.

**The meeting was adjourned.**