

M I N U T E S

COMPUTER OUTREACH COMMITTEE

May 29, 1986

PRELIMINARY BUSINESS

The meeting of the Computer Outreach Committee of the Legislative Council was called to order by the Chairperson, Senator Joe Welsh, at 10:20 a.m., May 29, 1986 in Senate Room 24 of the State House, Des Moines, Iowa. Members present in addition to Chairperson Welsh were:

Senator James Wells
Representative Bob Arnould

Also present were:

Mr. Sandy Scharf, Director, Computer Support Bureau
Mr. Thane R. Johnson, Senior Research Analyst, Legislative Service Bureau

LACK OF QUORUM - INFORMATIONAL MEETING

Chairperson Welsh noted that a quorum of the Committee was not present, but the meeting would be used for informational purposes. Chairperson Welsh asked Mr. Scharf to summarize the costs to the Legislative Computer Support Bureau relating to public access to the legislative information computer system. Mr. Scharf stated that the income from 14 users to the system was \$600 each for a total of \$8,400 for the 1986 Session. He added that expenses for the system totaled \$13,063, of which \$11,447 is a one-time cost for installations and equipment and \$1,616 is for monthly charges for five telephone lines and five modem maintenance costs. He stated that the resulting cost deficit of \$4,663 for the first year resulted from the lack of 11 users which were expected as income when the system was originally established. A copy of Mr. Scharf's financial data is attached to and by this reference made a part of these minutes.

LACK OF PUBLIC USERS

In reply to a question by Chairperson Welsh, Mr. Scharf stated that he had a maximum of 25 users signed up to use the legislative information system but 11 users did not finally contract for the service. He stated that during the 1987 Session only three subscribers will be needed to break even and pay the one-time installation and equipment charges. In reply to another question by Chairperson Welsh, Mr. Scharf stated that the impact of the subscribers to the system was negligible during the session and less than one percent of the used time was taken by the subscribers.

PUBLIC SUBSCRIBER LIST

Concerning reasons for the 11 potential subscribers not finally subscribing, Mr. Scharf stated that one reason was incompatible computer equipment by the potential subscriber and that one or two of the actual subscribers signed up twice. Mr. Scharf also submitted a list of the public access subscribers for 1986, a copy of which is attached to and by this reference made a part of these minutes.

SERVICE PERFORMANCE

In reply to a question by Senator Wells, Mr. Scharf said that he believes the public access subscriber service is a success and, after initial startup problems were corrected, everyone seemed pleased and there has been no negative feedback from the subscribers. He stated that he believes the problems with the system originally had been corrected and he anticipates no problems in the future.

SERVICE ENHANCEMENTS

In reply to a question by Chairperson Welsh, Mr. Scharf stated that the contract for the public access to the legislative computer is on a calendar year basis. He also commented that in the future he will request a deposit for those potential subscribers when they request connection to the system. He also stated that he plans to expand the public access system to include Code search capabilities and direct access to Code provisions at additional cost. Concerning access of legislators to the system during the interim, Mr. Scharf stated that approximately one-third of the legislators responded to a survey last fall and that 15 legislators showed definite interest in having access to the legislative computer. He estimated that it would cost approximately \$5,000 to provide three lines for legislators under a direct dial-in system and that he would provide figures on the cost of a callback system which would provide greater security. He stated that legislators who were interested in the computer access would need a compatible personal computer plus a board which would cost \$510. He stated that this board could be purchased by the Computer Support Bureau and used by legislators while members of the General Assembly.

In reply to a question by Representative Arnould, Mr. Scharf stated that he believes 45-50 public access users could be connected to the system without any negative impact on it. He stated that these 45-50 public access users would be exclusive of legislators who might be interested in access.

Concerning additional expansion of the legislative computer system, Mr. Scharf stated that he is awaiting a decision on using the system for the House and Senate Daily Journals.

ADDITIONAL STAFF SUGGESTED

Mr. Scharf also stated that the Committee should consider the employment of a public access coordinator to maintain the system if the number of users increases as proposed.

WORD PROCESSING COMPLAINTS

In reply to a comment by Chairperson Welsh, Mr. Scharf stated that he would review the word processing system to determine if a more user-friendly capability can be developed.

ADDITIONAL EQUIPMENT

Concerning the purchase of new or additional equipment for the legislative system, Mr. Scharf stated that perhaps some new terminals will be needed in the near future, but otherwise no additional equipment purchases are anticipated.

LARGEST SYSTEM USER

In reply to another question by Chairperson Welsh, Mr. Scharf stated that the Legislative Service Bureau is the system's largest user and, as an example, the Legislative Service Bureau used the system 39 percent of the time during the month of April, 1986.

ADDITIONAL COST INFORMATION

Mr. Scharf stated that he would obtain additional pricing information concerning legislative access to the computer system and present it at the Committee's next meeting.

NEXT MEETING

Chairperson Welsh asked the Legislative Service Bureau to schedule a meeting of the Computer Outreach Committee prior to the next Legislative Council meeting in June.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Committee, Chairperson Welsh adjourned the meeting at 10:45 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

THANE R. JOHNSON
Senior Research Analyst